BEATRICE.

BEATRICE,

OR THE

INCONSTANT;

A TRAGIC NOVEL.

By such examples are we taught to prove,
The sorrows that attend unlawful love;
Death, or some worse misfortune soon divide,
The injur'd bridegroom from his guilty bride.

ROWE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL I.

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BEATRICE.

LETTER I.

MISS HARCOURT

TO

MISS GREVILLE.

West-Hill Farm.

ONCE again, my dear *Beatrice*, I entreat you to reflect, ſeriouſly, on the ſacrifice you ſeem determined to make, of happineſs to ambition. Think, my friend, not only of the indelicacy, but the injuſtice of marrying a man, whom you cannot love, — muſt I ſay, whom you cannot even *eſteem*; merely to aggrandize yourſelf by his rank and fortune. —You plead indeed, in your ex-

cuſe, that you are not prepoſſeſſed in favour of any other man; and add, that as you have been hitherto inſenſible, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe you ſhall ever remain ſo. — Ah! my dear *Beatrice!* if you would be happy, truſt not to this fallacious reaſoning; encourage not a vain hope, at the expence of your future felicity: You have a tender, and an affectionate heart, capable of the warmeſt, the moſt tender friendſhip; and can you believe that it will not one day be ſuſceptible of *love!* Be aſſured, theſe ſplendid trifles, which you ſo much covet, cannot, of themſelves, beſtow felicity.— True happineſs, in the married ſtate, can be found alone in mutual eſteem and affection; but how cruel would be your ſituation, if you ſhould, hereafter, find your boaſted indifference ſupplanted by ſentiments, which it would be in the higheſt degree criminal to cheriſh. Of your perſeverance, in the paths of rectitude and virtue, I cannot ſuffer myſelf to doubt, even for a moment; but is your peace

peace of mind, my ſweet friend, a matter of ſmall conſideration? Is the ——— but why this uſeleſs repetition of what I have already ſo often urged in vain?—Too much I fear, that the arguments of reaſon, and the entreaties of friendſhip, will prove alike ineffectual, to prevail with you to ſave yourſelf from certain infelicity. Expect not, however, that I can be preſent at your marriage—I ſhould ſhudder to hear the friend of my heart ſolemnly ſwear before the holy altar, to *love* and *honour* the man for whom her heart feels not the ſlighteſt tenderneſs or eſteem; the bare idea of ſuch a profanation makes me tremble. Pardon (if I appear too ſevere) a zeal with which the ſincerity of my affection for you inſpires me.—I am not ſufficiently at eaſe to enter, at preſent, on any other ſubject; and am greatly apprehenſive, that what I have already ſaid, on this, will have no weight with you.—I, therefore, bid you adieu.—I go to-morrow to *Morton-Hall*, in conſequence of a requiſition of my dear *Mrs. Morton*,

Morton, in a letter, of a few days ſince.—She has a viſitor with her (*Mrs. Willis*, of *Scarborough*) whom ſhe wiſhes me to aſſiſt her to amuſe and entertain; this is her obliging ſtile; but I know her deſign is to give *me* pleaſure, which I cannot fail ever to receive from her converſation and ſociety. — Once more, my dear *Beatrice*, farewell.—If you are juſt, you believe that I am your moſt tender and affectionate friend,

HENRIETTA HARCOURT.

LETTER II.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

MISS HARCOURT.

The Lodge.

HENRIETTA! the irrevocable vow has paſſed my lips.—The indiſſoluble

ſoluble knot is tied. — Wedneſday laſt ſaw me become the Wife of *Aubigny*.— *Heigho!* Yet why do I ſigh? Do I lament the having exchanged the name, and unſounding appellation of *Miſs Greville*, for the lofty, the *bewitching* title of *Counteſs of Aubigny?* forbid it all ye patrons of aſpiring minds! ambition! pride! and every ſentiment which dwells in noble ſouls alone——— Forbid that *Beatrice* ſhould ſo degrade her better knowledge, and offer ſo unpardonable an affront to thee, her generous guides to rank, fortune, pleaſures, and all the joys of life.— I am greatly chagrined with you, *Henrietta*, for refuſing to be my *bridemaid*; the reaſon you aſſign for this refuſal, and, indeed, the whole of your letter, is ſo ſevere, that nothing but my knowledge of your unbounded affection for me, could procure your pardon. Indeed you ought to ſay every thing to elate, not to depreſs my ſpirits on this important occaſion; for, to ſay the truth, I feel, at times, more ſerious than I could wiſh, or than I

certainly ought to be, conſidering the flattering proſpects which ſurround me.

We are at preſent at the *Lodge*; for which ſeat we ſat off immediately after the ceremony, accompanied by my *uncle* and *aunt Weſtbury*, and my couſin *Lucy*. They will ſpend a few weeks with me in town, where I hope to be in a very ſhort time; for I am, as you may ſuppoſe, all impatience to viſit that region of pleaſure, in a ſtile in which I have been ever ambitious to appear. I ſhall not attempt to give you any deſcripion of our *Chateau*; when we are obliged to quit *dear London*, you will, I flatter myſelf, prevent me from ſinking into the horrors of melancholy, by obliging me with your company here. — You will not ſuſpect me of flattery when I ſay, that my *Henrietta's* ſociety can render any, and every, place pleaſing to her *Beatrice*. — But can you not viſit me in town? the meaſure of my happineſs will then be complete.

Write

Write to me, I entreat you, and ſay that you will give me this ſo much deſired felicity: But if you love me, *Henrietta*, no more on the old odious ſubject; it could now ſerve no other purpoſe than to awaken reflections, which, perhaps, my peace of mind requires ſhould lie for ever dormant.—Dear friend of my heart, adieu.

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER III.

MISS HARCOURT

TO

LADY AUBIGNY.

Morton-Hall.

I Received my dear *Lady Aubigny's* letter laſt night.—May ſhe enjoy every felicity her heart can wiſh, and her moſt ſan-

guine hopes expect, in her newly-entered on ſtate. Your concluding entreaty was unneceſſary; far be it from me to wound the heart of my friend with unavailing reproof: May the continued happineſs of *that friend* demand, in future, from the pen of her *Henrietta*, repeated congratulations alone.—It is not in my power to viſit you in town, as you obligingly requeſt; I cannot leave the *Hall* ſo ſoon; but propoſe to myſelf the real pleaſure of ſpending ſome time with you when you return to the *Lodge*.—*Mrs. Morton* deſires to felicitate you on your late important change; and cordially unites her affectionate wiſhes with mine, for all that may contribute to your happineſs.—I am much pleaſed with *Mrs. Willis*; who is lively, ſenſible, and accompliſhed, and reveres my dear *Mrs. Morton*, as who, indeed, does not, who is acquainted with the goodneſs of her heart, and the attractions of a mind, fraught with every virtue?——Adieu, my beloved friend; I

am

am ſummoned to the tea table, and the ſervant waits to take this to the *Poſt-Office.*

Yours, with the tendereſt affection,

HENRIETTA HARCOURT.

LETTER IV.

THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

Morton-Hall:

IT muſt be owned, my dear *Beatrice*, that *Mrs. Willis* is not totally in the wrong when ſhe defines a beau to be a kind of being wonderfully calculated to enliven the ſolitude of the country; and an agreeable-enough acquiſition to the fire ſide of a trio of females; at leaſt ſhe will be allowed to have right on her ſide, when he happens to be all that is

amiable, *elegant*, and *accompliſhed*, in the perſon of *Sir Charles Seymour*. It is even ſo, *Beatrice*: Your favorite is returned; to the equal joy and ſurprize of *Mrs. Morton*; who has never received a letter which he wrote to her, in which he mentioned his deſign of following it in a very few weeks.

Two years paſſed in *Italy*, where he attended, with filial duty and tender care, the declining health of an affectionate father, whoſe death, ſome months ſince, ſo greatly affected good *Mrs. Morton*, had not produced ſo great an alteration in him as to keep me one moment in doubt, reſpecting his perſon. *Mrs. Morton* and myſelf were at work in her dreſſing room, whilſt *Mrs. Willis* was reading to us *Mr. Sheridan's* excellent comedy of the *Rivals*; when a *chariot and ſix* drove up the avenue, attended by three ſervants on horſe-back, in deep mourning. *Mrs. Willis* was firſt at the window. "A beau, my dear madam, as I live!" ſhe exclaimed;

ed; "keep him, I entreat you; *Miſs Harcourt* and I will pull caps for him; the conteſt will delightfully enliven the ſhades of *Morton*."—My dear friend ſmiled at her lively ſally; and was expreſſing her wonder of whom this unexpected viſitor might be, when the carriage entered the court, and I inſtantly recognized the features of *Sir Charles*; but my ſurprize fixed me motionleſs, and, for a few moments, deprived me of the power of ſpeech. He alighted, and *Mrs. Willis* now exclaimed, "Heavens! my couſin *Charles*." At the name *Mrs. Morton* ſtarted from her ſeat: "*Sir Charles Seymour!*" ſaid ſhe; "impoſſible! my dear *Emily*, it cannot be."—"Indeed, indeed, madam, it is," ſhe returned; and in an inſtant was half way down the ſtairs; *Mrs. Morton* following to the landing place. This little reſpite gave me time to recover from the ſtupor into which my ſurprize had thrown me; and, as I flatter myſelf, enabled me to receive his compliments, and make him my congratulations

on his return, with ſome degree of collection. If I may judge from his manner, when he addreſſed me, he was not, himſelf, totally free from that embarraſſment which uſually attends an unexpected meeting.—You will eaſily imagine my dear *Mrs. Morton's* extreme ſatisfaction in her *nephew's* return; although *Mrs. Willis* declares it can be nothing to *her's*, who is in rapture, ſhe ſays, at the thought of the embelliſhment ſo ſweet a fellow (her own expreſſion) cannot fail to give to our rural ſcenes and feſtivities.—We are invited to a ball, which will be given by *Mr. Freeman*, on Friday next, at the *Grove*.—The laſt time I danced there, *you* was of the party. Do you not believe that I ſhall miſs you, and regret your abſence? When do you mean to write to me?

HENRIETTA HARCOURT.

LETTER

LETTER V.

LADY AUBIGNY

TO

MISS HARCOURT.

The Lodge.

DO I not believe that you will *miſs me*, and *regret my abſence?* This is, I think, the query. To which I anſwer *no*, poſitively *no!* For how, my dear *Henrietta*, can you even *think* of *me*, when you will have, *you know*, ſo agreeable a companion in —— *Mrs. Willis*; and tho' the unexpected return of *Sir Charles Seymour*, who may probably contrive to be your partner, cannot fail of being an *alloy* to the pleaſure you would otherwiſe, moſt probably, receive from the eaſe, elegance, and gaiety, which always diſtinguiſhes the entertainments and hoſpitalities of *Mr. Freeman*; yet will *Mrs. Morton's* ſociety, and that of the ſprightly *Emily*, enable you,

you, I doubt not, to undergo the penance of the evening without repining.—*Henrietta!* you are a very hypocrite, or you would have candidly confeſſed to me, that ſuch ample compenſation would be made to you for my loſs, in the ſeaſonable ſupply of *couſin Charles*, that with all your known, and gratefully acknowledged tenderneſs for me, you could not, on this occaſion, feel a vacancy in your boſom, or a diminution of your enjoyment, from even *my* abſence. But tell me, my dear girl, how is he?—what ſays he?—has he declared himſelf?—no poſſible political reaſon can now ſubſiſt to render his ſilence accountable; for that you were the firſt, and will ever be the only miſtreſs of his heart, I have always believed, and am determined to continue to believe:—I am all unſpeakable impatience and anxiety on this ſubject.—A *ball* muſt do wonders on ſuch an occaſion; then an unexpected meeting—*ſpeechleſs*—*motionleſs*—*ſurprize*, on the one ſide; delightfully flattering *embarraſſment* on the other—O how productive

ductive all this of charming events!—It cannot be otherwiſe—of this I am perſuaded.—I only want to know the *manner* of the happy *denouement*. Say ten thouſand kind things to the dear fellow from me. Ah! why was I in ſuch haſte to marry! I might have had him myſelf; as it is, how I ſhall envy you! Not a word more will I ſay of myſelf, till you have fully gratified your impatiently enquiring.

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER VI.

MISS HARCOURT

TO

LADY AUBIGNY.

Morton-Hall.

NO, my dear *Beatrice*; it is not for me to encourage ideas ſo flattering; ſo far above my humble pretenſions and

and expectations. It is true, that, previous to his leaving *England*, I have ſometimes believed that I was not indifferent to this moſt amiable of men; but if a ſenſe of the diſparity of our fortunes, and ſituations in life then kept him ſilent, and enabled him to conquer any riſing prepoſſeſſion in my favour; how much leſs reaſon have I to expect that he ſhould loſe ſight of theſe advantages, now that time, abſence, and an encreaſe of fortune, have all probably, conſpired to eraſe from his breaſt any beginning partiality which he might once, perhaps, have felt in my favour.—Is it not even very poſſible that he may, in reality, have never thought of me with partiality at all? You know he never uttered a ſyllable expreſſive of more than a ſincere and ardent friendſhip, which might be the natural conſequence of frequent intercourſe, joined to a ſuppoſed idea of the merit of her, whom *Mrs. Morton* diſtinguiſhed with the honor of *her* friendſhip, her protection, and declared eſteem. I may ſay with *Indiana*; "*His eyes*

eyes are all that have ever told me he was mine;" and although the eye be not "*an organ that is given to lying*;" is it not poſſible for female vanity, aided, perhaps, by *approbation*, at *leaſt*, of the object, to miſtake their language? Be this as it may; I owe it to the generous friendſhip of my dear *Mrs. Morton*, (who has ever ſince the awful period that bereaved me of my laſt ſurviving parent, and left me an *almoſt* friendleſs orphan, treated me with a tenderneſs truly maternal,) to baniſh from my heart every idea which is inconſiſtent with the gratitude I owe to her, and to the views it is natural to ſuppoſe ſhe ſhould entertain for this only heir of her large fortune, and the laſt ſupport of a noble family, eminent equally for its ancient ſplendor, and its exalted virtues.

I have more than once, my dear *Beatrice*, imagined, that ſhe may have thought of *Mrs. Willis*, as an eligible match for her *nephew*. They are, you know, diſtantly related; ſhe has a large jointure; is lovely,

lovely, and accompliſhed, and of a diſpoſition truly amiable. Is it not more than probable that ſhe may be his choice? I know ſhe thinks highly of him.

This is the day of our engagement at the *Grove*; of courſe you will hear from me again in a day or two.—I muſt now adjourn to my toilette; from whence, no doubt, I ſhall ariſe your *well-adorned*

HENRIETTA HARCOURT.

LETTER VII.

THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

Morton Hall.

DOES not this follow my laſt with tolerable diſpatch? The evening before laſt we *graced* the *ball* at the *Grove*.

Mrs.

Mrs. Willis ſeemed attired by the *Graces*; every part of her dreſs was equally elegant and becoming; ſhe had ſpared no pains to ſet off her charms to advantage; and, to do her juſtice, was a very lovely figure. *Mrs. Morton* appeared in all that neatneſs and propriety, for which you have ſo much admired her.—*Sir Charles*, but there is no deſcribing the gracefulneſs of his appearance.—We were received by *Mr. Freeman*, and his charming daughters, with their uſual politeneſs and good-humoured complacency. The ball was opened by *Miſs Freeman* with *Sir Charles*, who danced the ſecond minuet with *Lady Lewiſham*. *Mrs. Willis* declined a minuet, I meant to have followed her example, but was ſo much preſſed to the contrary by *Mr. Freeman*, who ſaid he had been requeſted, by his very particular friend, to entreat for him the favour of my hand, that I was obliged to comply, and ſuffer *Sir Harry Newnham* to lead me into the circle: As he reconducted me to my ſeat, he aſked whether he was ſo *fortunate* as to find me unengaged;

unengaged; and if he might aſpire to the *honour* of my hand for the two firſt *dances*; (we were to change partners, according to *Mr. Freeman's* uſual cuſtom, every ſecond dance.) Being perfectly diſengaged, I had no alternative, and therefore bowed aſſent; though it was truly diſagreeable to me to be thus *Monkey-led* (to borrow a phraſe from *Sheridan's* Jealous Lover) by one of the moſt complete coxcombs I ever beheld; and who, to my extreme mortification, was ſo particular in his ridiculous attentions to me, through the whole evening, as to engage the obſervation of moſt of the company. *Sir Charles*, who went down the firſt dances with *Miſs Freeman*, engaged me for the ſecond.—The unconſcionable *Sir Harry* then, again, demanded my hand; but I had the ſatiſfaction to be able to refuſe his requeſt, having been already engaged by *Mr. Cornwall*, a very genteel and agreeable young man, who has been ſome time on a viſit at the *Grove*.

At

At one o'clock the doors of the ſupper-room were thrown open, and the company, which was numerous, ſat down to a repaſt, which was furniſhed with every delicacy the ſeaſon could produce. between two and three we returned to the ball-room; the dances again began, and continued till near five; I went down only one dance, being really fatigued, and out of ſpirits.—*Sir Harry* declined dancing at the ſame time, and with the moſt provoking aſſiduity, ſeated himſelf by me, uttering a variety of follies, which he, doubtleſs, conſidered as highly gallant and entertaining.

After ſome time that I had been puniſhed, by being obliged to liſten to his extravagant flatteries, his rhapſodical and unmeaning nonſenſe—(For it was to no purpoſe that I changed my ſeat, and even ſought an aſylum, from perſecution, by taking one by the ſide of *Mrs. Morton*, in the card-room; he purſued me every where.) *Mr. Freeman* called him aſide; I re-

I rejoiced at my deliverance, and was leaning on the back of *Mrs. Morton's* chair, my attention engaged by the play, when the ſound of *Sir Charles's* voice, whoſe entrance I had not perceived, made me turn my head with a ſuddenneſs which had, probably, the appearance of my having been abſorbed in thought; for, ſeating himſelf by me, on the chair which *Sir Harry* had juſt vacated; "Pardon me," ſaid he, in a low voice, "for awakening you from, perhaps, a pleaſing reverie; *Sir Harry!* the *happy Sir Harry!*"—At this very moment the fated diſturber of my evening's enjoyment returned to the taſk my evil deſtiny had aſſigned him, that of tormenting, of mortifying me, almoſt beyond endurance. *Sir Charles* roſe as ſoon as he perceived him, and ſlightly bowing to me, with an air which ſeemed, methought, to make a merit with me of his reſignation, returned to the dancers.

At length the wiſhed-for hour of departure arrived. *Sir Harry* attended us, however,

however, to the coach; nor could I prevent his taking my hand, nor withdraw it, till I was in the carriage, without apparent rudeneſs, and even an implied vanity, in ſeeming to conſider a circumſtance ſo trivial in itſelf, as of any kind of conſequence.

I did not, however, eſcape the raillery of the ever lively *Mrs. Willis*, who would ſpeak of nothing but the conqueſt which ſhe inſiſted I had made; adding that ſhe had no doubt of congratulating me, ere long, as *Lady Newnham*. "Nay," ſaid *Mrs. Morton*, ſmiling, "you muſt then ſuppoſe that *Sir Harry* has likewiſe made a conqueſt. But I cannot be of your opinion. I neither believe that *Henrietta* can be ſubject to that ſtrange fatality, called *love at firſt ſight*; or that *Sir Harry Newnham* would ever be the object of her choice. Am I not right, my dear? Is he the kind of man to whom you could ſurrender your heart?" I was confuſed; I was even *pained* by this converſation.—

It

It will be hardly neceſſary, my dear madam, rejoined I, with aſſumed vivacity, to refuſe my heart to *Sir Harry*, at leaſt, till he makes application for it; or to accept, or reject, the title of *Lady Newnham*, till I am honoured with the offer of it; an event which I am far from the vanity of believing is at all likely to happen. *Mrs. Willis* was going to reply, when fortunately for me, the coach ſtopped, and I was relieved from a ſituation by no means pleaſing to me. *Sir Charles*, who had been ſilent from the moment that *Mrs. Willis* had mentioned the odious *Sir Harry*, ſeemed to have loſt all the gaiety which had diſtinguiſhed him at the *Grove*. I thought he even ſighed, as he handed me out of the carriage. He has ſince treated me with a reſerve, which, as I never before experienced, it is difficult for me to ſupport, without ſhewing the pain it occaſions me. *Mrs. Morton* has more than once expreſſed to him her apprehenſions that he is unwell. "What have you done with your ſpirits, *nephew*?" ſaid

ſaid ſhe to him this morning; "you muſt ſurely be indiſpoſed; *I* ſhall be ſeriouſly uneaſy if *you* do not very ſoon recover your uſual chearfulneſs of temper." He ſpoke of a ſlight head-ach, which he obſerved always rendered him an indifferent companion; but aſſured her, he was otherwiſe perfectly well.—"And ſo," ſaid *Mrs. Willis*, "it is in the power of a *ſlight* head-ach to diſconcert the ſpirits of a *lord of the creation*; and to change my, ſometimes agreeable and ſprightly, couſin into as unentertaining and inſipid a companion as the verieſt victim to vapours, and fancied ills, amongſt the weakeſt of our weaker ſex: But my dear *Sir Charles*," purſued ſhe, looking archly in his face, are you ſure, *very* ſure, that the pain is confined to the head? Has it not reached the confines of the *heart*.—I have heard of little indiſpoſitions there, which are ſtrangely apt to affect the ſpirits.—Some miſchievous eyes have, I fear, darted their pernicious glances, with too ſure effect.—O theſe wicked *balls!* But tell us, *Charles*,

who is the cruel fair? Were the ſparkling *black*, or languiſhing *blue*, theſe mercileſs eyes that have ſo wounded you?—You won't tell," purſued ſhe, in the ſame breath, while he could not refrain from ſmiling at her lively volubility; "O as you pleaſe; I ſhall ſoon find you out.—*Miſs Harcourt* ſhall aſſiſt me in gueſſing. I have an opinion of her ſkill in theſe matters; and confide a little in my own." "Take care that I do not retaliate," replied *Sir Charles*, laughing; "by inſtructing *Miſs Harcourt* to put a few queſtions to *you*, which may develope the hiſtory of *another* heart".—"*O malice*," interrupted ſhe,—"*Miſs Harcourt*; it is a barbarous calumny that he would utter—thus I drown the cenſorious ſounds;" and flying to the *organ*, ſhe began the *coronation anthem*, with the whole power of the inſtrument.—This being no very good recipe for an *head ach*, *Sir Charles* ſoon left the room. I waited till ſhe had ended her performance, which ſhe really executed with much brilliancy, and then retired to write to you.

I muſt not cloſe my letter without firſt telling you that *Sir Harry* paid a very unexpected viſit to *the Hall* yeſterday morning; and although *Sir Charles* was abſent, he ſtaid a full hour, to the infinite amuſement of *Mrs. Willis*, who diverts herſelf not a little with my *future card*, as ſhe *will* call him. On his taking leave he addreſſed, particularly to *me*, in a lowered tone of the voice, a hope of permiſſion to renew his viſit; and ſtealing a look at his really handſome face, as he paſſed the looking-glaſs, with a bow *tout degagee*, and a ſmile which had evidently no other meaning than to exhibit a fine ſet of teeth; with an air of ſelf-ſatisfied complacency, he tripped gracefully to his carriage; leaving me (*once again Beatrice*,) mute from aſtoniſhment, and affording to *Mrs. Willis*, freſh ſubject of raillery, which ſhe did not fail to take advantage of.

You will not call me vain perhaps when I ſay that *Sir Charles*, who, on his return to dinner, was told by *Mrs. Morton* of *Sir*

Harry's viſit, looked remarkably ſerious; and by a ſigh which actually ſeemed involuntary, as he caſt his eyes toward *me*, inclined me for a moment to believe that the intelligence was by no means pleaſing to him — and raiſed a glow on my cheek, which I hope he did not know rightly to interpret; I cannot however but accuſe *myſelf* of vanity in this inſtance, as he ſcarcely once addreſſed himſelf to me during the remainder of the day, and was more than uſually attentive, I thought, to *Mr. Willis*. But it is time to releaſe you. — Farewel, my dear friend; may every felicity attend you.

HENRIETTA HARCOURT.

Did I ever deliver to you, as enjoined, the congratulations of *Sir Charles* on your marriage? and his warm wiſhes for your felicity? I am afraid not. He would not be well pleaſed did he know that I had ſo long deferred to tranſmit them to you; or that I at laſt, left them to the poſtſcript; You, I truſt, will both pardon me, and keep the ſecret.—Again *adieu*.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

LADY AUBIGNY

TO

MISS HARCOURT.

The Lodge.

YOU are a little ſimpleton, *Henrietta*, and have not half the penetration of your *leſs ſeeming-wiſe* (I love to coin words) *Beatrice*;—I am ſatisfied however, things are *en train*. I am a fortune-teller child; and prophecy that an agreeable declaration will ſoon be made *ſomewhere*; and whether it be to *Emily Willis*, or to *Henrietta Harcourt*, cannot, you know, be very material; to be ſure theſe young and lovely widows are a bewitching kind of people; particularly when *well jointured*; and there is no anſwering for what *tendre relationſhip*, aided by the above-mentioned charms, may produce: but as I am perſuaded that it will be the ſame thing to you, *I* am

quite eaſy on that head; I am not however the leſs impatient for another letter; you will be pleaſed to remember this, and ſo *we bid you heartily farewell.*

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

The dear *Sir Harry* (for why ſhould not I have a poſtſcript as well as yourſelf? in my mind they are pretty enough appendages to a female epiſtle) The dear *Sir Harry* then, let me again repeat; you will have him in reverſion no doubt. We ſhall be a *Baronet's lady* all the ſame, and though to be ſure, there is ſomething *prettier* in the ſound of *Seymour*, yet with a *lady* before it, that of *Newnham* will not be ſo *deſpicable.*

LETTER

LETTER IX.

SIR CHARLES SEYMOUR

TO THE

HONOURABLE MR. HERBERT, AT PARIS.

Morton-Hall.

I Arrived ſafe at this place, my dear *Herbert*, about ten days ſince; and had the unfeigned ſatisfaction to find my dear ℣revered *Mrs. Morton* in perfect health. Perhaps the extreme joy which this tender relation teſtified at my return, was encreaſed by the circumſtance of that return's being, in ſome meaſure, unexpected; for ſhe had never received the letter which ſhould have prepared her for my viſit.—When I entered the court-yard, I involuntarily looked up to the dreſſing-room window—judge what were my feelings when, in the firſt object which caught my eye, I recognized the lovely *Henrietta Harcourt*. The firſt, the only object of

my affections. Whilſt I was yet in the *Hall*, I was welcomed by a voice which I preſently knew to be that of my lively couſin, *Emily Willis* (Have you ever before heard the name *Herbert?*) My good *Aunt* gave me a reception which both pained and pleaſed; the dear venerable woman waited not my entrance into her apartment; ſhe met me at the end of the gallery; but unable to ſpeak, ſhe burſt into tears; I kiſſed her hand with grateful fervour, whilſt a thouſand mixed emotions, equally deprived me (for the moment) of the power of articulation. Speechleſs however was not *Emily*, who expreſſed her ſatisfaction, by calling me, alternately and in the ſame breath, whilſt ſhe hung upon my arm, her dear, *dear Charles*, (how like you this?) and a *wicked wretch* for ſo inconſiderately ſurpriſing *Mrs. Morton*. My *Henrietta!* for I muſt call her *my Henrietta!* received me with a graceful dignity peculiar to herſelf; the glow of friendſhip, *Herbert* was on her cheek at my entrance; it encreaſed to the deepeſt crimſon

ſon when, privileged by the happy occaſion, I dared to preſs her balmy-breathing lips.—But it was not an angry ſuffuſion; the expreſſion of her lovely eyes, joined the welcome of her voice.—When the agitation of *Mrs. Morton's* ſpirits had a little ſubſided, and our joy became more calm, though not leſs ſincere, and delightful; ſhe began to enquire of the health and welfare of her friends in *Italy* and in *Paris*; the name of *Herbert* was not forgot;—the queſtion of "*is he married yet?*" now dyed the cheeks of *Emily* with a vermilion which equalled that of my *Henrietta*, tho' I dare not flatter myſelf that their bluſhes were ~~alike~~ produced by the ſame ſentiment.—I could not have the cruelty to heſitate in my reply:—the negative of my anſwer, accompanied by a glance at herſelf, which ſhe perfectly underſtood; threw ſuch additional life into her eyes, and gave ſo pleaſing an animation to her every feature, that perhaps it is happy for you, that there is ſuch a woman in the world as *Henrietta Harcourt*; *Emily's* avowed par-

tiality towards me alſo conſidered;—for how flattering is the favourable opinion of a fine woman, to the vanity of man; and how ſeducive, how dangerous the flattery that proceeds from the lips of beauty.—Orders having been given that no company ſhould be admitted; we paſſed a day of uninterrupted happineſs; of felicity which I had never before, in ſo great a degree, experienced; I indulged in the moſt delightful hopes, and when I retired to my appartment, my mind, filled with the moſt enchanting ideas, refuſed to yield itſelf to repoſe; notwithſtanding the fatigue of a long and diſagreeable journey.—She will love me, ſaid I to myſelf;—long ſince, her heart acknowledged for me the moſt lively friendſhip; the moſt perfect eſteem; will theſe not ripen into a ſofter paſſion, when aſſiduouſly cultivated and improved? To hopes like theſe, ſucceeded fears the moſt lively; the moſt afflictive apprehenſions; my *long abſence*,—my *former ſilence*,—all lovely, all amiably-engaging as ſhe is, ſaid I, muſt ſhe not have received

ceived the moſt ſplendid offers? may not ſome happier man have made himſelf an intereſt in her heart?—If ſo, where, *Seymour*, are thy dreams of felicity? where thy fond flattering ſchemes of happineſs? air-drawn viſions of ſweet domeſtic bliſs?—Tell me, *Herbert*, has not my folly *deſerved* to loſe her? What! could I have the monſtrous vanity to ſuppoſe that, becauſe ſome involuntary tenderneſs, which now and then eſcaped me, might lead her to believe my heart her captive; whilſt I carefully avoided the explanation of my ſentiments; that, in deſpite of a ſilence which perhaps ſhe knew not to interpret, ſhe was to preſerve her heart free, till my return, at ſome diſtant period, ſhould prove whether I meant to demand a boon ſo precious?—And yet, my dear friend, would not a different conduct, on my part, have been truly ſelfiſh, and ungenerous? my father, although a fond and indulgent parent, was, as you well know, a bigot to the deſire of aggrandizing his family, by forming a ſplendid alliance for his ſon.—His health,

which had been for ſome time on the decline, was at this period ſo precarious, and his ſpirits ſo much impaired; that any aggravation of uneaſineſs might, I dreaded, prove fatal to a life ſo juſtly dear to me.

Sincere and ardent as was my paſſion for this lovely woman, I yet wanted courage to riſque a *Father's* diſpleaſure; ſtill leſs could I ſupport the thought of embittering his declining age, by any ſelfiſh conſiderations of my own happineſs. Thus ſituated, to have explained to *Miſs Harcourt* the ſituation of my heart; to have endeavoured the attainment of her's; far diſtant as might be, as I was compelled to *wiſh* might be, the time, when I ſhould be at liberty to make her the offer of my hand, ſince the death of an affectionate parent alone could give it me, would have been to act in direct oppoſition to my every idea of delicacy, and diſintereſted regard.

This

This charming woman could not but have perceived the impreſſion which her merit had made on my ſoul; ſhe well knew my high reverence of the parental character;—that the foible of my *Father* (the brighteſt human character will have its ſhades) was a too great, may I ſay a miſplaced ambition; might ſhe not, from thence, be enabled to develope the myſtery of a ſilence which, ſhe could not but have obſerved, it was equally difficult, as painful, to me to preſerve? if, thought I, I ſhould, hereafter, be at liberty to purſue the dictates of my heart, in openly avowing her its miſtreſs, and ſoliciting her hand; have I not ſome reaſon to hope from the friendſhip with which ſhe deigned to honour me, that I may be yet happy in the accompliſhments of my wiſhes, if ſhe ſhould ſtill remain ſingle, and unengaged? if I ſhould find her already married, or diſcover that a happier, a more deſerving lover, has poſſeſſed himſelf of her heart; the dear girl, ſhall remain ignorant of my ſentiments and intentions; I will return to

Italy

Italy or *France*,' for never more will I reſide in *England*; never will I be united to another.

Alas, *Herbert!* I begin already to fear that I am doomed to wander an exile from my native land. Two evenings ſince we were at a private ball at *Mr. Freeman's*; I would not ſeem deſirous of engaging the hand of *Henrietta*, earneſtly as you will believe I muſt have wiſhed to have done ſo, becauſe I did not deſire that my too penetrating couſin ſhould diſcover a partiality with which I did not, as yet, mean her to be acquainted. Previous to our ſetting out for *the Grove*, *Miſs Harcourt*, as well as *Emily*, declared her determination to decline the minuets; I had vainly endeavoured to combat her reſolve; —She was afterwards ſolicited to the ſame purpoſe by *Mr. Freeman*, and, as I could obſerve, equally in vain, till on caſting his eyes towards a young man at the other end of the room, whom I ſoon recollected to be *Sir Harry Newnham*, and then *again*, addreſſing

addreſſing her, ſhe, with a ſmile of pleaſed aſſent, as I thought, yielded to his entreaties. They went down the two firſt dances together; I pleaded for the honour of her hand for the third, and was ſucceſsful; after the fourth I was again obliged to reſign, but was pleaſed (for a moment) to find that ſhe then favoured *Mr. Conwall*. She danced very little after ſupper: *Sir Harry* who had eyes only for her, and who attended to her ſolely, with a particularity which could not but engage the general notice (and which gave me infinite pain, though I endeavoured to conceal it by affecting a gaiety, which I am ſatisfied muſt have ſat very aukwardly on me) in a few ſeconds complained of a violent cramp which obliged him to ſit down, and ſeated himſelf you need not doubt, by *Miſs Harcourt*; who ſoon after went into the *Card-Room*, attended however by *Sir Harry*, whither (the dance ended) I could not myſelf forbear to follow. I met my *Rival* (for as ſuch I even then began to conſider him) juſt coming out of the room with

Mr.

Mr. Freeman as I entered; and obſerved *Henrietta* leaning with a penſive air, on the back of *Mrs. Morton's* chair, and apparently buried in thought; for ſhe ſtarted, as from a reverie, when I ſpoke—I took the ſeat which *Sir Harry* had doubtleſs juſt vacated, and was at the very point of betraying the very ſecret of my heart, when he re-entered; I bowed, (what ſurely I was not entitled to have done) I fear I did more *reproachfully*, than *reſpectfully* to the *dear Henrietta*, and reſigned to the happier *Newnham* the ſeat, which nevertheleſs I infinitely envied him. When we left *the Grove* he gave her his hand as we deſcended the ſtairs, nor quitted her's till ſhe was in the carriage.

To add to the tormenting ideas which oppreſſed my mind, your provoking *Emily* ſeemed to dwell with pleaſure on the ſubject of *Henrietta's* conqueſt; almoſt froze my blood to iſicles, by declaring it as her opinion that ſhe ſhould ſoon congratulate her as *Lady Newnham*. Her replies were by

by no means calculated to render me more eaſy: *Sir Harry* actually viſited here the next morning, and even intimated on taking his leave, a wiſh of permiſſion to renew his viſit.—Of this I was informed by *Mrs. Morton* (for I was abſent at the time) in the preſence of *Henrietta*, who bluſhed as her eyes met mine, which were probably but too expreſſive of my very unpleaſant ſenſations: O, *Herbert!* what meant the expreſſive, the downcaſt ſweetneſs of her's? Can it be poſſible that ſhe ſhould feel a partiality for ſo egregious a coxcomb? a man too, whom it ſeems, ſhe had never ſeen till this unlucky evening? and whoſe conduct, if not nearly impertinent, could not ſurely but have been diſpleaſing to a woman of her delicacy and underſtanding.

Herbert I am aſhamed of my weakneſs; O may I be authorized ere long to add of my *injuſtice* to this moſt loved of women. Scarce have I ſpoken to the ſweet girl ſince I have heard of *Sir Harry's* viſit.—I have

have not even treated her with the civility of common attention; yet is ſhe all ſweetneſs and complacency; and were I not afraid, by flattering myſelf too far, of feeling too poignantly the anguiſh of diſappointed hope; I ſhould, at times, be almoſt tempted to believe that pleaſure, at leaſt, is not the ſentiment ſhe feels from my altered behaviour towards her. I cannot longer, my friend, ſupport this ſtate of torturing ſuſpence: the moſt wretched certainty will be preferable to it. The reſult of *Sir Harry's* next viſit will be, perhaps, the offer of his hand, which ſhould ſhe accept,———my next letter, *Herbert*, will inform you whether we muſt meet in *Paris* or in *England*. The latter, ſhould the hand of *Miſs Harcourt* be yielded to another, ſhall no longer contain your

CHARLES SEYMOUR.

LETTER.

LETTER X.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

MISS HARCOURT.

The Lodge.

I AM too *good*, too *condeſcending*, too *ſilly*, to write to you again, ſo little conſideration as you ſhew for the known impatience of my temper;—but ſince it happens that I find ſome little pleaſure in talking to you, even on paper, I wave the dignity of reſentment on this occaſion; and content myſelf with demanding your immediate conceſſions; conveyed to me in a letter otherwiſe full of intelligence; aye and of the right kind too; *or*—but I hate threats, till every other trial has been found ineffectual to bring the wicked to repentance.

Amongſt

Amongſt the ſeveral families who have viſited me at *Aubigny-Place*; that which peculiarly merits the *honour* of being introduced to you, conſiſts of a *Lady Meadows* and her two daughters. *Lady Meadows* is the widow of a very reſpectable *Baronet* of that name, who died ſome years ſince; leaving beſides the daughters above-mentioned, an only ſon, the preſent *Sir Edward Meadows*, who is at this time in Derbyſhire. *Lady Meadow's* is juſt turned of fifty, ſhe has been very handſome; and is even yet a fine figure. Dignity, ſweetneſs, and complacency, are ſo blended in her countenance, that you cannot behold her without feeling ſentiments in which reſpect and affection have an equal ſhare; her good ſenſe is conſpicuous in the conduct of her daughters, who were educated under her own immediate inſpection, and who have been ever accuſtomed to treat her with the confidence and familiarity of friendſhip, without deviating from the reverence and duty which they owe to her as a *parent*. *Miſs Meadows*, in perſon greatly

greatly reſembles her mother; her figure is graceful and noble, her features are regular and beautiful: but although wholly free from pride, ſhe has a ſerious reſerve of temper, which is often miſtaken for the former, and renders her, if not leſs amiable, leſs pleaſing at leaſt than *Lady Meadows*, or than her ſiſter *Charlotte*, who cannot be ſtiled handſome; yet may pretend to ſomething more than the agreeable, but whoſe greateſt charms are the peculiar frankneſs of her temper; the eaſe, affability, and good-humoured vivacity, for which ſhe is equally diſtinguiſhed and beloved, by all who know her. I am ſatisfied that you will be much pleaſed with this agreeable family, to whom I ſhall hope one day to *perſonally* introduce you; for they will be in *town* in a few days after us; where we are to viſit quite *en famille*. the day after to-morrow is fixed for our leaving the *peaceful* ſhade for the *tumultuous* city. Is it not thus that *you* would write *Henrietta?* with inexpreſſible delight do *I* think of quitting the inſipid ſameneſs of

of the *country*, for the amuſements and pleaſures of the *metropolis* in all their dear variety.

Adieu, atone for paſt errors, by future diligence.

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XI.

SIR CHARLES SEYMOUR

TO THE

HONOURABLE MR. HERBERT.

Morton Hall.

PREPARE to quit *Paris*, my dear *Herbert*; your happier *Seymour* will not meet you there. *Abſence!—exile!*—theſe are themes no longer to be dwelt on; ſuſpence and anxiety are no more, my friend; ſucceſs, and happineſs unmixed have

have taken their place, and authorize me to call for your congratulations; a demand which I am ſure you will readily honour. I had juſt ſent my laſt letter to the *Poſt-Office*, and ſtrolled into the garden to indulge my thoughts on the ſubject of it; when I was ſuddenly petrified by the appearance of *Miſs Harcourt*, with *Sir Harry Newnham*; I had certainly ſtupified into ſtone, had not the *dulcet* ſound of *Henrietta*'s voice, brought me to my recollection. "What, *Sir Charles!*" ſaid ſhe, with a ſmile of inexpreſſible ſweetneſs and good-humour (which attributing it to a wrong cauſe, encreaſed my diſcontent) in deep contemplation? "I fear," added ſhe, finding that I yet ſpoke not, "you cannot forgive my interruption of your meditations." "I rather, madam, have cauſe to fear that I ſhall not be eaſily pardoned for an involuntary intruſion;" rejoined I with an air of doubt, not viſibly piqued; and only bowing to *Sir Harry*, would have retired to another part of the garden; when *Henrietta* ſaying, "you will not leave us, *Sir Charles.*"

Charles;" and *Sir Harry* adding that he had intended himſelf the honour of paying me his reſpects; I returned with them to the houſe; had not my apprehenſions blinded me, I might have eaſily diſcovered by the confuſed and mortified air with which he ſpoke, and by the viſible chagrin which appeared on his countenance, that the reſult of his converſation with the ſweet girl had been far from ſatisfactory to *Sir Harry*. *Henrietta* alone indeed ſeemed ſufficiently collected for converſation; whilſt ſhe could gain from either little more than repeated monoſyllables. She left us when we had reached the houſe; and *Sir Harry* after half an hour's conſtraint on himſelf and on me, at length took his leave, to the equal relief of both. Wretched beyond expreſſion from the dread of a ſucceſsful rival, and reſolved not longer to endure a ſtate of incertitude; I ſought, and ſoon obtained an interview, with *Miſs Harcourt*; yet ſuch was the inconſiſtency of my feelings, that though but a moment before I had ſo impatiently wiſhed for the opportunity

tunity of diſcloſing my ſentiments; my fears that her affections were already engaged, and that her heart beat not in uniſon with mine, kept me for ſome time ſilent, and I know not but that I might have actually parted from her without having entered on the ſubject to which I had ſo earneſtly wiſhed to engage her attention, had ſhe not herſelf led to it (without knowing that ſhe did ſo, and viſibly for the purpoſe of ſaying any thing to break a ſilence which became embaraſſing to both) by rallying me on my thoughtful appearance when in the garden; a thoughtfulneſs, ſhe ſaid, in a tone of good humoured vivacity, the traces of which had not yet left my brow; and do you ſuppoſe, purſued ſhe, ſmiling, that I ſhall honour you with my company whilſt you continue thus abſent, and your thoughts evidently engroſſed by ſome diſtant object. Be aſſured," interrupted I, eagerly taking her hand, and again animated with the reſolution of diſcovering whether I had any intereſt in her heart;

that my thoughts cannot ever be abſent whilſt you are preſent; yet are they at this moment wholly occupied by the very ſame object on whom they were bent at the time you allude to. This is a perfect *enigma*, ſaid ſhe, bluſhing, and attempting to withdraw her hand, which however I ſtill preſſed in mine; the plaineſt of truths, returned I; but will my dear *Miſs Harcourt* deign to aſſure me that *her* thoughts ſhall not be *utterly* engroſſed by the happy envied object with whom I ſo unexpectedly met her this morning? Will ſhe permit me to go one ſtep farther, and regard me as the ſincereſt, the moſt affectionate of her friends, anxiouſly zealous for her happineſs, and which he prizes infinitely above his own; whilſt I, trembling, aſk if *Sir Harry Newnham* has not the enviable felicity of being preferred by her? if he is not, at leaſt a candidate for that heart, to the poſſeſſion of which *Seymour* has had the preſumption to aſpire, and would reſign every other earthly bliſs to gain? I pauſed—agonized by the extremes

tremes of hope and fear—She was ſilent for a moment; embarraſſed by a declaration at once ſo ſudden and explicit; but ſoon recovering a little from her confuſion. "*Sir Charles*," ſaid the ſweet girl, "you have condeſcended to ſolicit my confidence as a friend, and I cannot refuſe it you, though in ſo doing, I act in oppoſition to my ideas of delicacy towards a man whoſe ſecrets I do not hold myſelf entitled to divulge;—*Sir Harry* has honoured me with the offer of his hand;" "and you will accept it," interrupted I, preſſed by an emotion which I could not reſtrain, "you will conſent to his happineſs, and doom to miſery the man who loves you, who has ever loved with the tendereſt, the moſt diſintereſted affection." "And why will you ſo haſtily conclude?" replied ſhe, ſmiling, and endeavouring, by her vivacity, to conceal the encreaſing confuſion which the ardent earneſtneſs of my manner occaſioned to her, "that I cannot refuſe the hand of *Sir Harry?* do you believe that wealth and titles are higher in my eſtimation than the

infelt felicity of the mind? *Sir Harry* is undoubtedly, a very fine gentleman; yet not wholly irreſiſtible. I have ſatisfied myſelf therefore with acknowledging my obligations to him for propoſals ſo diſintereſted, and ſo ſuperior to my merit and pretenſions; but which I muſt nevertheleſs be permitted to decline;— and now *Sir Charles*," purſued ſhe, without giving me time to anſwer her, "having repoſed in you the confidence you deſired, ſuppoſe we join *Mrs Morton* and *Mrs. Willis*, who are expecting us to accompany them on their evening ramble." "Stay, my dear, *Miſs Harcourt*," cried I, again taking her hand, which ſhe had withdrawn, and leading her again, not wholly reluctant to her ſeat;—"a little longer let me treſpaſs on your indulgence—I cannot conſent to loſe the moment, which I have ſo ardently wiſhed for.—You have kindly condeſcended to tell me, that you have refuſed the hand of *Sir Harry Newnham*; but perhaps ſome happier man has poſſeſſed himſelf of your affection; and I am yet deſtined to ſee you another's.

another's.—Speak, my beloved *Henrietta*;" for ſhe remained ſilent and embaraſſed, "may I be permitted to encourage the dear hope, that I may one day call you mine? or muſt my heart reſign the fond flattering ideas it has ſometimes dared to entertain, that you might not deem it unworthy the return of your's."

"I ſhould be greatly *unworthy* of the diſtinction with which you honour me, *Sir Charles*" ſaid the incomparable girl; "did I not anſwer you with the utmoſt ingenuity and unreſerve.—Thus then I reply, that would the inequality of our circumſtances, and the gratitude I owe to *Mrs. Morton*, permit me to liſten to you on á ſubject ſo intereſting and important; I could not be inſenſible to the offer of a heart, whoſe virtues challenge univerſal eſteem. As I am ſituated I muſt requeſt, both for your ſake and my own, that you will never again ſpeak to me on a topic, to which honour, and prudence, equally forbid me to liſten.—Your friendſhip is all

that is permitted me to hope; the continuance of that will always form one of the chief pleaſures of my life." "Do not think my deareſt *Henrietta*," cried I, eagerly, "that after the delightful hope you have given me, that it may be poſſible for me to make myſelf an intereſt in your heart, I can content myſelf with the title of friend *alone*. I muſt indeed be to you ever moſt truly, moſt tenderly ſuch—but let the endearing name of *huſband* be added to that of the *friend*, and ſanctify my claim to your *affections*. *Mrs. Morton* has, I am perſuaded, a too ſincere regard for *me*, as well as too high an eſteem for her *Henrietta* to oppoſe my happineſs;—but were it otherwiſe, I am the maſter of my own actions. My fortune is more than ſufficient for all the comforts and conveniencies of life."—"No more in this ſtrain *Sir Charles*, I entreat you," ſaid ſhe, interrupting me, "however independant *you* may be, *I* am under the higheſt obligations; *Mrs. Morton* has been a ſecond parent to me, nor ſhall any conſideration induce

induce me to repay her kindneſs, her even maternal tenderneſs, with ingratitude."—Noble! generous girl! how greatly does the combined frankneſs and delicacy of her mind, exalt her above moſt others of her ſex.—How ineſtimable will be the treaſure of a heart like her's! I with ſome difficulty, drew from her permiſſion to ſpeak to *Mrs. Morton*, and to acquaint her with the ſecret of my heart—but my paper is full, and I am aſhamed of the bulk of my letter.—You muſt wait another poſt for the ſequel of my little hiſtory. Let your impatience be leſſened by finding that I ſubſcribe myſelf your happy

CHARLES SEYMOUR.

LETTER.

LETTER XII.

LADY AUBIGNY

TO

MISS HARCOURT.

Pall-Mall.

HERE I am at laſt *Henrietta!* hurried out of my ſenſes; bewildered in pleaſures; nothing but parties from morning till night, or to ſpeak more properly from *noon* till *morning*. I have been in expectation of a letter from you, every day ſince I have been in town, which is now a fortnight.

I concluded my laſt to you with an earneſt entreaty you would write to me ſoon: What in the name of fate has become of you? this encroaching *Sir Charles*, I ſuppoſe, engroſſes the whole of your time and thoughts; but let him not flatter himſelf that your friends will tamely ſubmit to ſuch

ſuch a monopoliſer. — The *Meadows's* came to town only yeſterday. They are to ſpend to-morrow with us; and we are to paſs an hour in the evening at *Ranelagh*, at which place I made my *entreé* for the firſt time as *Counteſs of Aubigny*, (*O the charming ſound!*) a few evenings ſince; but how ſhall I give you, (*you* have no notion of ~~receiving~~ joy from general admiration) any idea of my felicity. I entered the *Rotunda* accompanied by *Lord* and *Lady P.* and *Lucy*, dreſſed to the utmoſt advantage, and blazing in a profuſion of jewels, and became almoſt inſtantly the object of univerſal attention.—The men ſeemed to vie with each other in doing homage to my charms; whilſt three parts of the women were ready to expire with envy at the adulation I received. I am aware that I ſhall incur your cenſure, perhaps your contempt, by the avowal; but I cannot refrain from the confeſſion, that the pleaſure which I experienced from this triumph was exceſſive, almoſt too great to be concealed; for you well know that I

am not an adept in the art of diſſimulation. But why talk I to you of any thing but my diſpleaſure with you for your cruel ſilence? if I did not believe that there was at this moment a letter from you on the road to me, I am not ſure that I ſhould ſubſcribe myſelf your affectionate,

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XIII.

SIR CHARLES SEYMOUR.

TO THE

HONOURABLE MR. HERBERT.

Morton-Hall.

IT was not till the next morning that I could gain an opportunity of ſpeaking to *Mrs. Morton*, on the ſubject ſo near my heart; I then ſent to beg an audience of her in her dreſſing-room (where ſhe uſually paſſes an hour or two after breakfaſt alone)

alone) I gained inſtant permiſſion to attend her.—She ſmiled as I entered, and demanded what extraordinary occaſion had procured her the honour of my company at ſo early an hour—" You will pardon, I hope, this intruſion on your retirement, madam," replied I, " when you learn that I am come to ſolicit your concurrence in the moſt ardent wiſh of my heart; on your approbation of which muſt depend the future happineſs of my life.' " I ſhould hope," returned *Mrs. Morton*, that my dear *Sir Charles* is too well aſſured of the tender affection which I have ever acknowledged for him, to fear for his felicity, as far as it can depend on me; but pray be ſeated," proceeded ſhe, " and inform me without ceremony, how I can be the inſtrument of your happineſs, and in what particular my concurrence is become ſo neceſſary to your repoſe. " Such my dear madam, has been ever your extreme goodneſs to me," I reſumed, " that I know not why I ſhould be in the leaſt fearful of finding you now adverſe to my

wiſhes; but where the bleſſing we would attain is invaluable, we muſt ſurely tremble at the very poſſibility of its being refuſed, and in the purſuit of what is infinitely dear to us, however ſanguine our expectations, yet will ſome degree of fear interweave itſelf amidſt our brighteſt hopes. When a *Henrietta Harcourt* is the prize to which we have the ambition to aſpire, who can be without ſome apprehenſion, whilſt the ineſtimable gift is not yet fully ſecured."

Mrs. Morton's ſatisfaction already appeared in every feature of her benevolent countenance; but ſhe was ſilent;—I proceded—"From the firſt moment that I beheld *Miſs Harcourt*, my heart has been her captive; every hour that I have ſince paſſed in her ſociety has diſcovered to me new excellencies, and confirmed the firſt impreſſion.—You, madam, will be at no loſs to imagine, why I ſhould ſo long have delayed to acquaint this charming woman with the paſſion which ſhe had inſpired; perhaps

perhaps I ſhould not even yet have ventured its explicit avowal, but from an accidental circumſtance which it is in your power to make me conſider as the moſt fortunate criſis of my life;—ſince on your entire approbation of the tenderneſs which I have acknowledged for this moſt lovely of women, am I permitted to hope for the happineſs of calling her mine. Speak then, my dear madam," continued I, reſpectfully taking her hand; "pronounce my fate, ſay that you approve my choice, and encreaſe your title to my endleſs gratitude." Satisfaction, *Herbert*, is too poor a word for the delight which now gliſtened thro' tears, in the eyes of my excellent *Mrs. Morton*.—"It is then as I wiſhed," ſaid ſhe, after a moment's ſilence. "I ſhall be happy in the completion of my moſt ſanguine hope; yes, my dear nephew, be aſſured that I not only *approve*, but *felicitate* your choice; moſt happy ſhall I be to receive as my niece, her whom I have ever loved with all a mother's tenderneſs; why then ſhould we delay to tell our *Henrietta*;

rietta, how ſincerely I rejoice in your mutual attachment." She roſe and led to the door; I accompanied her to the breakfaſt room; *Miſs Harcourt* was there alone; at the ſight of us together, a ſudden glow overſpread her face;—the book which ſhe was reading fell from her hand.—*Mrs. Morton* perceived her embaraſſment, and kindly haſtened to relieve her.—"My dear *Henrietta*," ſaid ſhe, affectionately taking her hand, "forgive me if my abruptneſs diſtreſſes you, ſince it is the conſequence of my eagerneſs to prove to you the truth of my affection.—My nephew has honoured me with the confidence of his attachment to you; an attachment which the generoſity of your ſentiments would not permit you to encourage, till it had received the ſanction of my approbation; not that *alone* my dear girl, my utmoſt *gratitude* will be yours, if by condeſcending to accept the hand of one ſo dear to me, you ſecure to him that happineſs which an union with your virtues cannot fail to give him."

My

My whole ſoul oppreſſed at once with love, joy, and admiration, permitted me only for ſome moments to preſs alternately the hand of *Mrs. Morton* and that of *Henrietta* to my lips, in a ſilence more expreſſive perhaps than language itſelf.—Nor was the dear girl more capable than myſelf of expreſſing in words the feelings of her heart; ſo much was its ſenſibility affected, by the maternal love, and declared high eſteem of this truly noble minded woman; the tear of gratitude however, which trembled in her eye, ſpoke them more forcibly than the moſt ſtudied eloquence could poſſibly have done; and fully evinced to her revered friend, that not from being unaffected, but overpowered by her tenderneſs, proceeded the ſuppreſſion of ſentiments to which the fulneſs of her heart denied the utterance. You will imagine my impatience for the happy day which will make my *Henrietta* irrevocably mine.—The ſweet girl, who is ſuperior to the little arts and foibles of her ſex, pretends not unneceſſary delays: what happy proſpects

open

open to my view?—Come then, my dear *Herbert!* I conjure you come, and be a witneſs of my felicity: I have already mentioned you to *Miſs Harcourt* as a friend I moſt eſteem; I am commiſſioned by *Mrs. Morton* to entreat your preſence; and the lovely *Emily*, tho' ſilent, joins in the requeſt, by the complacent ſmile which ſhe beſtows on our petitions to you; and the conſcious bluſh which vermillions her fair cheek, when we expreſs our aſſured hopes that they will prove efficient. If indeed you can reſiſt our united ſolicitations, you *reſpect* not *Mrs. Morton*, you *admire* not my ineſtimable *Henrietta*, you *love* not the ſaucy *Emily*; nor repay, with equal regard, the friendſhip of your

CHARLES SEYMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

MISS HARCOURT

TO

LADY AUBIGNY.

Morton-Hall.

I Have been long ſilent my dear *Beatrice*, but the intelligence which I have to communicate to you will compenſate for an involuntary neglect; for I do not believe I flatter myſelf when I feel aſſured that my *own* ſatisfaction cannot exceed *yours*; when I write myſelf happy beyond my moſt romantic wiſh. Matters have taken a very unexpected turn at *Morton-hall*, for which we are not a little indebted to your *dear Sir Harry*; he paid a ſecond viſit two days after his firſt; and ſeeing me enter one of the walks of the garden as his carriage drove up the avenue; he haſtily quitted it, and inſtantly joined me, before I had time to make my eſcape, as I would gladly

gladly have done, not being very ambitious of a *teté-a-teté* which promiſed—little but aukward embaraſſment on my part; on his, perhaps, wounded pride, and diſappointment. He expreſſed his ſatisfaction at meeting me alone; and after much extravagant compliment, honoured me with the declaration of his paſſion, and the offer of his hand;—a proceeding ſo abrupt, ſo little ceremonious, and punctilious, had doubtleſs ſomething of novelty in it;—notwithſtanding the charms of which, you will believe that I did not find it an hard taſk to decline the too high honour intended me; but words could not paint to you the *ſurprize*, as well as the chagrin, which took poſſeſſion of my *ſoon-deciding* lover; who had not prepared himſelf to expect a refuſal ſo cruel for his vanity,—to be rejected by a girl, whom he doubtleſs imagined would eſteem herſelf highly fortunate in the diſtinction with which he honoured her, and in the proſpect of being elevated from obſcurity, to rank and fortune, was what he never could have forſeen, and proved not to him

matter

matter of more mortification than aſtoniſhment. Pained to ſee him ſo greatly diſconcerted, I was endeavouring to give a different turn to the converſation, when we were met by *Sir Charles*, whoſe ſurpriſe at ſeeing me thus accompanied, was not, you will believe, much inferior to that which *Sir Harry* had juſt experienced;—you will likewiſe imagine that I could eaſily forgive the diſſatisfied air with which he replied to my raillery on his thoughtful appearance; for till I ſpoke to him, he ſeemed wholly abſorbed in reverie, and wonder.—I ſuffered him not to leave us, as he ſeemed to deſign, and we walked together to the houſe,—when I retired to my apartment, glad to be releaſed from a ſituation not perfectly deſirable—I had yet however another conference to ſuſtain: a *conference*, O, how unlike the former! it was *Sir Charles Seymour* who *now* requeſted my attention; to a ſubject in which *his* heart was intereſted, and to which *mine* therefore could not be indifferent. Not to tire you at preſent with particulars, let it ſuffice, that this happieſt moment of my

my life, assured me of the entire affection of my worthy *Seymour*; of which, but from the apprehensions *Sir Harry's* visit had occasioned him, I should have remained, for some time longer at least, dubious and uncertain.—I have the almost unhoped for felicity of finding my dear *Mrs. Morton* favourable to her nephew's attachment; she is even impatient for our union, and has begged that it may take place before the time of her annual journey into *Wales*; on which she will set out in the course of the next month.—Satisfied as I cannot but be, of possessing his tendereſt affection, his friendship and esteem; I wish not to retard the day that will unite me to the worthiest of men;—beware then *Beatrice* of furnishing me with fresh subjects for animadversion and reproof; when I shall have commenced matron, you know my title to sermonize will not be so easily controverted as at present perhaps it might be.—I think my first lecture will run something in this stile.

"If

"If happineſs (thus I ſhall ſay) if happineſs, my friend, be worth your care; let not a dangerous levity of temper, conquer the goodneſs of your heart; and render uſeleſs the ſuperior underſtanding with which nature has kindly endowed you. How can a woman of your ſenſe delight in the abſurd flattery and adulation of a herd of coxcombs, who have juſt intellects ſufficient to divert themſelves at the expence of the vain women who liſten to them.—give but a little time to reflection my ſweet friend, and you will recollect many a fluttering ſiſter of diſſipation, whoſe better diſpoſitions; and genuine love of virtue, propriety, and regularity of conduct, have been fatally loſt in the whirl of pleaſure, and the ~~deſire~~ rage of admiration."—This may ſerve as a ſpecimen, my dear; let me know if you approve it, and whether you are of opinion that it will have its due effect.—Adieu, and believe me ever moſt truly your's.

HENRIETTA HARCOURT."

LETTER XV.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

MISS HARCOURT.

Pall Mall.

NEED I tell you my friend, how ſincerely the heart of your *Beatrice* rejoices in the near proſpect of your felicity? and would it not be now ſuperfluous to aſſure you that my happineſs is inſeparably connected with your's, and that it is not in the power of deſtiny to deprive me of the moſt lively ſenſations of pleaſure, when I know that the boſom of my *Henrietta* is exhilerated with delight? You will believe that the former part of your letter, was abundantly better calculated to excite in me the ſmile of ſatisfaction, than the pathetic ſpecimen of the matronly ſtile with which you thought proper to conclude it;—tho' to own the truth, ſtrange as you may

may think it, I did ſmile even at that, which indeed may be aſcribed to two different cauſes. In the firſt place the engaging image of *Lady Seymour*, being full in my view, ſpread over my mind ſuch ſenſations of gaiety, and filled it with colours of ſo bright an hue, that they left not room for tints of a darker ſhade.—Secondly, the idea of *myſelf* metamorphoſed into a being made up in all humility, of I know not how many antique qualities; pacing the *Rotunda* at *Ranelagh*, or ambling in a cotillion at *Almack's*, with the primitive look of your good old aunt *Margery*, over the breakfaſt room chimney-piece at *Weſt-Hill*; returning the gaze of admiration, the compliment of gallantry and the delightfully flattering aſſiduities of little attentions, with the modeſt bluſh of the laſt *century*, and the declaration that my *duty* and my *gratitude* to him who had conferred on me the ineſtimable favour of his hand, would not permit me to encourage ſuch follies. Do you not believe they would be greatly edified by this novel mode of conduct *Henrietta?*

rietta? At firſt they might view me with a look of ſurprize, ſuſpect the ſoundneſs of my intellects; but in a little time, no doubt, I ſhould be univerſally reverenced as a miracle of prudence, a *model* for *wives*, and be held up by all the ſage *grandmothers* and *aunts*, to the young women under their care, as an example for their *future* imitation. Then how would *Lord Aubigny* congratulate himſelf on the happineſs of poſſeſſing ſuch a *rara-avis*? a man of the faſhionable world, devoted to its pleaſures, and ſcarcely exiſting but within the ſphere of its attractions; how infinitely proud would he be of having made a choice which would be ſo highly approved by all whoſe ſuffrages he is chiefly ſolicitous to obtain. Forgive, my dear *Henrietta*, the ſeeming levity with which I treat your friendly admonitions. I feel moſt ſenſibly, the kind, the affectionate motives from whence they ſpring, and whilſt the exuberance of a lively temper runs away with my pen, and almoſt, without my concurrence, forces me to appear equally inſenſible to the *friendſhip* that

that *dictates*, and the folly which *demands* your reproofs; my heart glows with grateful love for the tender attention with which you watch over my errors, and kindly endeavour to correct my numerous failings.—I cannot, indeed, at *once*, renounce the enticing pleaſures of diſſipation; the vanity of admiration; return the cup of delight, juſt taſted, from my lips, and liſten to the ſtill voice of reaſon, whilſt the joys, after which I have ſo long ſighed, are yet in their firſt bud of promiſe: But I will endeavour, as much as poſſible, to regulate the impetuous ſallies of intemperate vanity, and redundant ſpirits. I will, on every occaſion, lay open to your inſpection my whole heart. I will not have a ſingle feeling, a ſingle thought, concealed from you; you ſhall be my cenſor, adviſer and guide; and I ſhall hope, in time, to prove myſelf not unworthy of the pupillage I entreat. For the preſent, think not too hardly of my foibles; they are not, I truſt, vices of the heart, but faults, which, floating only

on the ſurface, have left the ſpring untainted—open at leaſt to conviction—and to the warmeſt feelings of gratitude and ſincere affection, with which I ſhall be ever your obliged,

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XVI.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Pall-Mall.

SURELY my dear friend might have found one leiſure half hour ſince the date of her laſt, to have obliged me with a line. Important as are the nature of her preſent engagements, can they not allow ſomething to friendſhip? Why then have you been ſo long ſilent? without reflecting on my deſire to be informed more particularly when the event is to take place which, I ~~do~~ plainly foreſee, will

will rob me of more than half of my friend. — I ſhall not apologize for the brevity of this epiſtle, ſince it is a ſupernumerary one, and diſpatched merely, as a note of enquiry, to learn what has become of you? — I am, beſides, in momentary expectations of the *Meadows*'s, in whoſe party I am going this evening to the *Ridotto*. I am, though not juſt now your *well-pleaſed*, your truly *affectionate*,

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XVII.

LORD AUBIGNY,

TO

COLONEL EGREMONT.

SO fame has conveyed to thee, on the wings of the wind, even as far as Ireland, the fair report of thy friend's marriage with one of the loveliеſt women

in *England*; and although the flying dame has not failed to add, that ſhe had neither birth nor fortune to recommend her, thou congratulateſt me upon the event, and ſeemeſt to think me a wiſe fellow, for what the reſt of the world will call me fool.—Be this as it may, I am married; my *wife* (what a *gothic*, what a *barbarous* ſound) is gay, handſome, elegant, faſhionable; and, to tell thee the truth, had I not believed that her exquiſite beauty, and the faſhionable eaſe and elegance of her manners, would have rendered her the admiration of the *Ton*, and in ſome meaſure have juſtified my choice, and palliated, at leaſt, the abſurdity of my inattention to family and fortune, I had never married her, faſcinated though I was with her charms, and that matrimony was alone the price at which ſhe was to be obtained, I knew too well to think, even for a moment, at the ſame time, of *her* and *liberty*.—Nominal freedom only will I, however, loſe, for free will I be ever in reality; and having ſome reaſon

to

to believe, that my *lady wife's* predilection was rather for my title and fortune, than my perſon, I ſhall not have the dread of her breaking her heart on my mind, ſhould my own, attracted by novelty, or ſeduced by ſuperior beauty, though at preſent I think *that* cannot be found, ~~to~~ veer towards another object, and as we ſhall be equally careful to avoid all impertinent and unfaſhionable curioſity reſpecting the conduct of each other, as, already, we begin to engage always in ſeparate parties, as ſhe will not be diſguſted by the ill-breeding of a churliſh, nor provoked to folly by the abſurdities, or vulgar notions, of a *jealous* huſband; I think it is probable that we may continue to live very eaſily together, without finding, on either ſide, any very material inconvenience from the chains with which we are ſhackled. At preſent ſhe is, ~~and~~ I think ſhe is, the ſole miſtreſs of my heart; and the gratification it yields my vanity to ſee her univerſally followed and admired, as the firſt woman in every

faſhionable circle, will probably contribute to preſerve to her, for ſome time to come, at leaſt, my entire affection.—When ſhall you be in *England, Egremont?* I triumph in the thought of introducing to thee my beauteous bride—of ſeeing thee dazzled, as thou infallibly wilt be, with the blaze of her unequalled charms.—I dine to-day with a party at *Willis's*; we ſhall all regret thy abſence, but none more than

Thine,

AUBIGNY.

LETTER XVIII.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

MISS HARCOURT.

Pall-Mall.

I KNOW not what poſſeſſes me! although I am greatly chagrined with you

you—though I have an hundred times reſolved not again to take up my pen, without previous conceſſions from yours; ſome ſtrange fatality impels, *obliges* me to try, *once more*, if my repeated entreaties will not at length gain from you an anſwer to the letter I have written to you. The *Ridotto*, of which I ſpoke in my laſt, was delightful; my ſpirits were uncommonly exhilerated; every thing around me ſeemed to ſhine with more than uſual brilliancy; we were, methought, in *Fairy-Land*, where all was faſcination and enchantment.—Sir *Edward Meadows*, who arrived in town early the ſame morning, and a *Mr. Pemberton*, his friend, were of our party.—I danced with the former, who well merits all the eulogiums I had heard of him from his ſiſters, and from all who knew him: I do not think him handſome, but he is *pleaſing*, *animated*, *elegant*, with the moſt expreſſive ſenſibility of countenance; there is a peculiar delicacy in his manners, infinitely prepoſſeſſing, and which I have never

equally obſerved in any other man. *Mr. Pemberton* (between whom and *Sir Edward* there has long ſubſiſted, it ſeems, notwithſtanding the difference of their age, for *Mr. Pemberton* is more than forty, and *Sir Edward* only ſix and twenty, the ſtricteſt intimacy and friendſhip) is a ſenſible, well-bred man, rather handſome, and would be perfectly agreeable, but for an uncommon ſerioufneſs of manners, which appearing, on a ſuperficial view, the conſequence of a reſerved temper, operates, at firſt, to his diſadvantage; but which, attentively obſerved, intereſts the heart in his favour—the traces of dejection, evident in his features, too plainly marking ſome ſecret eating pang, which deſtroys his peace, and embitters even the moſt chearful moments of his life.—He has never married, but *Lady Meadows* ſuſpects that ſome diſappointment, of the tender kind, is the cauſe of his melancholy. This, however, is mere conjecture: *Sir Edward* is, no doubt, in his confidence; but this very ~~reaſon~~ perſuaſion precludes

every

every idea of information from him, though the females of the family are not a little deſirous to learn the particulars of a hiſtory, which has probably ſomething peculiar in it. I own I have myſelf a wiſh to be acquainted with it. – There is a gentle friendlineſs in his diſpoſition, which, together with the idea that he is unhappy, ſo intereſts me for him, that curioſity has the ſmalleſt ſhare in the motives which incline me to this wiſh. —— Adieu, thou tardy one. If I hear not from you by the return of the *poſt*, indulge not the vain expectation of forgiveneſs from your highly-incenſed

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XIX.

MISS HARCOURT,

TO

LADY AUBIGNY.

Morton-Hall.

THE terrifying concluſion of my dear *Lady Aubigny's* of this evening, would have made me fly inſtantly to my pen, had I not already taken it up at the very moment your letter was brought to me; for the purpoſe of acquainting you that next Thurſday ſe'nnight is the day fixed for the event to take place, which muſt *mark the colour of my future fate.* — The conſideration is awful, *Beatrice*; nor can I help a weight that ſometimes hangs upon my heart, though I reproach myſelf with its ingratitude and injuſtice; for with *Sir Charles Seymour* what can I have

to

to fear? He is too noble, too generous, and too good, to give me the leaſt cauſe to doubt either of his kindeſt attention to my felicity, or the conſtancy of his attachment: — And yet, in the happieſt marriages, muſt there not be ſome alloy? ſome defect, perhaps, of temper hitherto unperceived, ſome fault which may have lurked within, unknown to myſelf, and unſuſpected, may interrupt the quiet of domeſtic peace, and render me leſs amiable in the eyes of him, without whoſe entire approbation, I could not think of happineſs. Such are the thoughts that, at times, obtrude themſelves on my mind, as the hour approaches, which will put into the power of another the future bliſs or miſery of my life. Not always, however, does my imagination dwell on this leſs chearing ſide of the picture; frequently does it repreſent to me, the felicity of paſſing my days in the ſociety of the man to whom my heart, long ſince, involuntarily united itſelf. It dwells with delight on the flattering idea, that, through

the chequered ſcenes of life, my unceaſing attention, and unaltered affection, may encreaſe his every ſatisfaction, leſſen his every care, and ſooth his every anxiety; whilſt the imperfections, which can alone impede my happineſs, ſhall be loſt in the trembling ſolicitude of tender and dutious affection.

My dear *Beatrice* will, I hope, indulge me with another letter, addreſſed to *Morton-Hall*, which place we ſhall leave immediately after the ceremony, and ſet out on our journey to *Wales*; from which we hope to return in leſs than a month, and ſhall then ſpend a week or two in town. With what pleaſure do I look forward to that period? to be at once bleſt in the ſociety of all whom I hold moſt dear; to embrace again my earlieſt, my ever beſt-loved friend. What felicity! what heart-felt joy! ſhall I not experience? Groundleſs, believe me, my deareſt *Lady Aubigny*, are thoſe apprehenſions which ſuggeſt to you, that any change of ſituation, or

enlargement

enlargement of connexion, may deprive you of any part of that affection which you have ſo long poſſeſſed. — Confined, indeed, ~~muſt be~~ are the precincts of that heart which muſt diſlodge one ſocial paſſion, ere it can give room to another. Conceive not mine, I entreat you, to be of this number; it is ſufficiently capacious for love and friendſhip, and will ever preſerve to both their rights inviolable. I muſt not aſk your preſence, my dear *Beatrice*, on the approaching occaſion; it would be, perhaps, too cruel to call you already from thoſe regions of gaiety, where you ſeem to find ſo much felicity.

Farewell, my ſweet friend, *Miſs Harcourt*, in all probability, bids you a laſt adieu; but ever will you retain the faithful, the undiminiſhed affection of your

HENRIETTA.

P. S. I had almoſt forgot to mention my *brother* and *Mrs. Harcourt*, who are with

with us, and desire to you their most affectionate remembrances. They will accompany us into *Wales*.

LETTER XX.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

MISS HARCOURT.

Pall-Mall.

BE assured, my dear friend, that I would joyfully attend you at *Morton-Hall* on the approaching happy occasion; but that I am, unluckily, in daily, almost *hourly*, expectation of the arrival of *Lady Campbell* (his *Lordship's aunt*) who has been some years in *Italy* and *France*, and is now on her return to *England*; but were the pleasures of this town alone, greatly attractive, as I have owned them to be to me, to be weighed in the balance with

with my deſire of being with *you*, the latter, believe me, would greatly preponderate: — Aſcribe then, my deareſt *Henrietta*, my abſence to its real motive, and think me not already ſo hardened in that faſhionable diſſipation, which you ſo greatly fear for me, as to have become callous to the call of friendſhip, and loſt to every worthier ſentiment you once acknowledged in your *Beatrice*. How ardently ſhall I wiſh, how impatiently expect, the expiration of the tedious month yet to intervene, ere I muſt hope for the felicity of ſeeing you. Your own heart will beſt deſcribe to you, the anticipated joy of mine in the thought of our meeting. I have not been perfectly well ſince my laſt, the conſequence, perhaps, of a little too much raking. I am not, as yet, thoroughly ſeaſoned to theſe agreeable irregularities; but much may be hoped from time, and a willing mind. I have been finely lectured, and preached to, on the ſubject, by *Mr. and Mrs. Weſtbury*, who, poor ſouls! lift up their eyes to Heaven,

and

and bleſs the fate that fixed them in the humble vale of obſcurity; — they will leave us, I believe, in a few days. Poor *nuncle* is already dying for rural gales, and *aunty* begins to fear that the young head of our little *Lucy* will be too full of modern notions, if ſuffered to remain long within the influence of ſome *examples:*—You do not preſume to gueſs what examples ſhe may mean, I hope. I have been kept a priſoner theſe two days, but mean to make my eſcape to the *Meadows's*, and hope by to-morrow to be quite myſelf again.—I will not cloſe my letter till then, in the expectation of being able to aver that I am ſo.

Half paſt eleven o'clock—juſt returned from *St. James's Square.* I did not intend to have written any more till to-morrow; but not finding myſelf inclined to ſleep, will ſcribble a little before I go to bed. I am not ſo well as in the morning, and have had the moſt intolerable headach all the evening.—The *Meadows's* were

not

not half ſo entertaining as I have known them. *Charlotte's* lively ſallies were leſs diverting than uſual; *Mr. Pemberton's* gloom was inſufferable, favourite as he is with me; in the general I was ſcarcely ſorry to hear that he meant to leave town in a day or two.—*Sir Edward!* even *Sir Edward!* I have thought more agreeable.—I was ſeated at the harpſichord, *Sir Edward* accompanying me on the flute, when the ſervant announced *Lady Ann Meynell.* She was received by *Lady Meadows* and her daughters with an affectionate familiarity. I thought the air, with which *Sir Edward* addreſſed to her his compliments, was rather embarraſſed, the mixture of confuſion and pleaſure in *her* countenance was too viſible to be miſtaken.

Lady Meadows introduced us to each other, as the two deareſt of her friends, between whom, ſhe flattered herſelf, there would ſubſiſt, on a nearer acquaintance, a mutual eſteem. The converſation, during

ring her Ladyſhip's ſtay, turned chiefly on her family and connexions. The *Earl*, her Father, I found was in the *South* of *France*, whither he had repaired, by the advice of his phyſicians, for the benefit of his health, which had been long impaired. The *Counteſs* and *Lady Ann* had attended him thither; but, as he was now on the recovery, a relation of the family, who was coming from thence to *England*, on buſineſs that would detain her only a few weeks, had engaged their conſent to her young friend's accompanying her, highly, if I miſtake not, to her *Ladyſhip's* gratification. She did not ſtay the evening, though repeatedly preſſed to do ſo by *Lady Meadows*, and to which I am certain her own wiſhes inclined her; but ſhe was under an engagement which compelled her to do violence to her inclinations: When ſhe had left the room, *Lady Meadows* enquired my ſentiments of her favourite: — I anſwered, that I thought her a very beautiful woman, and that her manners were ſoft and engaging.—I wiſh much

much that you ſhould be pleaſed with each other, rejoined her *Ladyſhip*; ſhe is of a diſpoſition truly amiable, and you will not find her unworthy of a place in your favour. I only bowed in reply: Indeed, purſued ſhe, it is not eaſy for me to ſay which of you has the firſt place in my affection; I love you both as my children.

"My dear *Lady Aubigny*, here," ſaid *Charlotte* (taking my hand) is, however moſt, *my ſiſter*; *Lady Ann* wants a little of the life and ſpirit which diſtinguiſh us, and which, it is my pride to ſay, gives us ſome degree of reſemblance to each other: Not but that her *Ladyſhip* is a very good girl, and, if ſhe will condeſcend to be my *third* ſiſter, I ſhall think myſelf honoured in the relationſhip. Here *Sir Edward* returned from attending *Lady Ann* to her carriage, and put an end to the converſation, by requeſting to lead me again to the *harpſichord*; but I began to feel a return of my indiſpoſition, which depreſſed my ſpirits, and unfitted me for harmony.

harmony. I wiſhed to be alone; and my having been ſo lately an invalid, was a ſufficient apology for taking my leave at an early hour:—And now, *Henrietta*, what do you think of this *Lady Ann?* Was there not ſomething ſingular in *Lady Meadows's* ~~inſtruction~~ introduction? Did not the eulogium ſhe beſtowed on her, and her expreſſed deſire of ſeeing a future intimacy between us, together with *Charlotte's* expreſſion of *third ſiſter*, ſpeak ſomething like an hope, an expectation, of her being one day really allied to them? Yet I did not think that I diſcovered in *Sir Edward* much of the *empreſſement*, the earneſt ſolicitude of the *lover:* Politely attentive, indeed, he was, but ſuch he ever is to all; yet he was certainly embarraſſed by her appearance; then ſhe is *handſome*, *elegant*, the avowed favourite of his family, the evident favourer of himſelf; yes, he muſt love her; has, perhaps, already entered into engagements; they will be very happy, no doubt; *Lady Ann*, at leaſt, cannot fail of being ſo: The

wife

wife of *Sir Edward Meadows!* How will half her ſex envy her ſuch a diſtinction. Good night, *Henrietta*; I will not ſeal this till to-morrow.

I am glad I did *not* ſeal my letter laſt night: I was *then* devoured with ſpleen, and could laugh at the recollection of the pettiſh, froward, humour I was in. You cannot think how *very* ill-humoured I felt myſelf; but it is wonderful, the effect which a trifling indiſpoſition will have on the temper and ſpirits; our frame of mind depends greatly on that of our bodies. I have been viſited this morning by *Sir Edward:* I was alone in my dreſſing-room when he entered; he apologized for his ſo early intruſion (for the breakfaſt things were not removed) but his anxiety, he ſaid, for my health, and the fear that my indiſpoſition ſhould have been encreaſed by my venturing ſo ſoon abroad, would not ſuffer himſelf to attend too minutely to punctilio. He then obſerved, that he had felt himſelf extremely uneaſy during the

the latter part of the evening, when I had appeared, he thought leſs well than before; and added, that he feared I had fatigued myſelf by ſitting too long at the *harpſichord*. I aſſured him it was ſo far from being the caſe, that I was almoſt ſorry for the interruption; but, purſued I, I ought to beg your pardon for the confeſſion, ſince to you it could not but have been an agreeable one.—It would puzzle a caſuiſt to account for the bluſh which I felt to kindle on my cheek as I ſpoke this, and to explain the cauſe of that aukward embarraſſment which accompanied it. — How little are half our ſenſations to be accounted for!—"The interruption that deprives me of the pleaſure I enjoy when *Lady Aubigny* honours me with her commands (it was at my requeſt that he took the *flute*) cannot ever be agreeable to me," replied he; and *Lady Ann* muſt excuſe me, if I ſay that I could have never better diſpenſed with her appearance. There are few men, however, rejoined I, ſmiling, who would not,

not, I believe, have been pleaſed with ſo bright an intruder; and you muſt forgive me, if I cannot intirely credit your diſavowal that you were ſo. She is a very lovely woman, purſued I, and appears to be equally amiable.—A rap at the door prevented farther converſation on the ſubject; and preſently *Charlotte* came running into the room:—"*Sir Edward* here as I live!" cried ſhe, entering, *téte a téte* with our invalid.—Why, my ſly brother, you never intimated to us this your gallant deſign when we met this morning; but come, it is my turn now:—I dare ſay *Lady Aubigny* thinks your viſit ſufficiently long; in any event you cannot be complained of, leaving ſo agreeable a ſubſtitute; and I want to talk of an hundred things with which I do not mean you ſhould be acquainted. You will require ſome little time to recover your breath, my dear loquacious ſiſter, replied he, laughing, before you will be able to begin upon one of them; and I cannot but be of opinion, that her ladyſhip would find the air of the *Park*,

or

or *Gardens*, this fine morning, more reſtorative to her health and ſpirits, than even *your* converſation. — That will do two hours hence, ſaid *Charlotte*. What ſay you, my dear *Beatrice*, ſhall we permit him to have the honour of attending us? If *Sir Edward*, replied I, has no more agreeable purſuit for his morning's amuſement, I ſhall moſt readily acquieſce in the propoſal. What engagements *can* he have more pleaſant, or more honourable? cried *Charlotte*. It is impoſſible to deviſe any one half ſo much ſo, returned he; then addreſſing himſelf to me, he added, I fear I have intruded too long; I will therefore take my leave for the preſent, and have the honour to attend you again at the time appointed.

Well, but my dear friend, ſaid *Charlotte*, when he had left us, how do you find yourſelf to-day? — You know not how unhappy you left us all laſt night, your altered ſpirits making us apprehenſive that you felt a return of your indiſpoſition.— If

If appearances, however, are not deceitful, you are greatly better to-day.—I am, indeed, quite a different being from what I was yesterday, returned I; I was not then myself free from the fear of being an after-sufferer from the pleasure I could not be persuaded to deny myself of visiting my kind friends; but my apprehensions have not been realized; on the contrary, I find myself infinitely better than could have been expected from my so recent indisposition. I rejoice to hear it, replied she, and the intelligence will give equal pleasure to my *Mother* and *Louisa*, who are both uneasy about you. As to myself, continued she, I had a *second* purpose to answer in this my early visit to you. I wanted to talk to you of a silly promise I have been drawn in to make of resigning at once my liberty and name to the pretensions of a *younger brother*: How I came to be so absurd, I know not; but so it was, that, previous to his going abroad, about a twelvemonth since, I actually engaged to keep my hand in reserve, to be

reſigned to him on demand at his return; *that return* is now almoſt hourly expected, and he has the audacity to avow (by letter) his fixed determination to claim the fulfilling of my thoughtleſs promiſe.—I could not endure that you ſhould learn this idle hiſtory firſt from others, when your kindneſs and friendſhip towards me ſo fully entitles you to expect that I ſhould be wholly unreſerved to you. — Will you believe, continued ſhe, that I experience ſomething very like impatience whilſt I am waiting his return; and am ready to exclaim with *Elfrida*,

" *With what a leaden and retarding weight,*
" *Does expectation load the wing of time!*"

After all, *Beatrice*, ſhall I not make a very ſimple figure? All the enchanting proſpects, the alluring hopes of wealth and title, rejected in favour of a man of ſome *family* indeed; but who, that excepted

cepted, has only *good ſenſe*, *good temper*, and *diſintereſted affection*, to recommend him. — And three *ſuch* recommendations, my dear *Charlotte*, returned I, as fully juſtify the preference you give to them. I am inexpreſſibly obliged by the confidence you have ſo kindly repoſed in me, and felicitate you on the approaching return of your worthy *Fereſt*: — *Your* choice of him prepares me to expect in him all that is amiable, and engages for him my higheſt eſteem. — He is a great favourite with *Lady Meadows*, I aſſure you, ſaid ſhe, and was *Sir Edward* to marry equally agreeable to her wiſh, ſhe would, I believe, think herſelf the happieſt of Mothers. — As to *Louiſa*, ſhe appears ſo inſenſible of love, and keeps her admirers at a diſtance, ſo *chilling* and ſo *awful*, that *ſhe* will, I dare ſay, paſs her whole life in "*ſingle bleſſedneſs*," which is, perhaps, at laſt, the wiſeſt determination; we are not all, however, born with equal claims to wiſdom, you know, and muſt ſome of us ſubmit to the fate to which we are led, either by

the weakneſs of our *heads*, or the ſuſceptibility of our *hearts*.—Will you forgive my freedom, ſaid I, when ſhe had done ſpeaking, if I aſk *whoſe* alliance *Lady Meadows* ſo earneſtly wiſhes for *Sir Edward?* Am I miſtaken when I conjecture it to be *Lady Ann Meynell?* It is, indeed, her Ladyſhip, replied *Charlotte*; a long and intimate friendſhip has ſubſiſted between the Counteſs and my Mother; ſhe has known and loved *Lady Ann* from an infant, and it has been, I believe, for ſome years, the invariable wiſh of her heart, to ſee her united with her ſon. I am ſincerely ſorry that it ſhould be ſo: *Sir Edward*, I am perſuaded, enters not into her ſentiments; this ſhe well knows, but cannot reſign her hopes, that the beauty, accompliſhments, and partiality of her favourite (for ſhe is evidently not indifferent to him) will, at length, make an impreſſion on his heart; but, I fear, theſe hopes will never be realized.—Our converſation now turned on general ſubjects, and ſoon after *Sir Edward* returned to eſcort us to the gardens. After

ter having paſſed a delightful morning, here I am again, and have taken the pains to ſcribble this length of paper to you. We paſs this evening at home, without company: *Mr. and Mrs. Weſtbury*, with *Lucy*, leaving us to-morrow. I feel a regret at the thoughts of parting with theſe dear friends that caſts again a damp on my ſpirits, which the morning air, and agreeable converſation of my companions, had quite enlivened. Does not this long epiſtle deſerve a ſpeedy reply? I leave it to your conſcience to determine the queſtion. — Adieu. I am ever *your*

BEATRICE.

Say all that is affectionate for me to *Mr.* and *Mrs. Harcourt.*

LETTER XXI.

THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

Pall-Mall.

THE papers of this morning announce to me, that my long-loved friend, *Miſs Harcourt*, is no more! The late ſeaſonable aſſurances, however, which you have given me, that I ſhould not find a leſs affectionate friend in *Lady Seymour*, prevents my feeling any regret for what cannot, ~~therefore~~, be juſtly termed a loſs. Accept then, my deareſt *Henrietta*, my warmeſt congratulations on the happy change in your ſituation; preſent them alſo to my dear *Sir Charles*, of whom you may be ſure I am not leſs fond than formerly, and *with* whom I ſhall certainly flirt

flirt it a little when we meet, in deſpite of your grave looks, and matronly deportment. I have this moment received intelligence that *Lady Campbell* is in *England*, and will be with us in a few days; and with her a *Miſs Sedly*, the orphan-daughter of a deceaſed friend, whom, from an infant, ſhe has generouſly taken under her protection.—I ſhall hope very ſoon to hear of your ſafe arrival at *Mordaunt-Caſtle*, and ſhall then begin to count the days with impatience till the month expires, the end of which, I am bid to hope, will give the firſt of pleaſures to your faithful

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XXII.

MISS SEDLEY,

TO

MISS RIVERS.

Canterbury.

MY dear friend will obſerve by this my *third* letter, ſince my arrival in *England*, that I am not unmindful of her injunctions to write frequently; as truly will I perform my promiſe of relating to you, without reſerve, every occurrence which ſhall happen to me in the new ſcenes of life in which I am going to be engaged: My hopes and fears, my ſorrows and my joys, ſhall be all revealed to you, as openly, as ſincerely, at this diſtance, as when we daily "*prattled arm in arm together*," and when we never retired to our pillows without having firſt communicated

municated to each other the trivial particulars of our ſmooth-gliding day.—Never, my dear *Maria*, ſhall I ceaſe to feel a kind of melancholy pleaſure, when I look back to thoſe days of undiſturbed ſerenity, which ſaw the firſt commencement of the friendſhip, that I both hope, and confidently believe, will be as laſting as our lives. Amidſt the various and entertaining objects which ſurround me, bleſt as I am in the *maternal* tenderneſs of my honoured and excellent benefactreſs, for whom I feel a reverence as high, a love as ardent, as ever warmed the breaſt of *filial* affection; a frequent ſigh eſcapes my boſom, and flies, unbidden, to my loved *cloiſter*, and my *dearer Rivers*. How happy had I been, could you have accepted *Lady Campbell's* invitation to accompany us to *England?* And how do I daily lament the peculiar humour of your deceaſed *Father*, that dictated the clauſe in his will, which obliges you to remain in the *convent* till you ſhall be of age? Many tedious months muſt yet elapſe ere

that period can arrive. — We leave the worthy *Doctor*, and his very agreeable family, to-morrow, and hope to be in *London* early on the ſame evening.—We are to be the gueſts of her *Ladyſhip's* nephew, and his new-married *Lady*, the *Earl and Counteſs of Aubigny*, until her ſeat in ——*ſhire*, known by the name of *Auburn-Place*, ſhall be vacated by the preſent tenants, who have held it during her long reſidence abroad.

Lady Aubigny is ſaid to be a very beautiful and accompliſhed woman; it is likewiſe *whiſpered*, that the allurements of wealth and title were her Ladyſhip's chief inducements to a marriage ſuperior to what her ſlender fortune and ſituation in life, though this was perfectly genteel, entitled her to expect.—She has been repreſented to *Lady Campbell* as a woman of faſhionable gaiety, and devoted to all the frivolities of a diſſipated life.—Perhaps the world is too ſevere; common fame is frequently unjuſt. My dear protectreſs, ever leaning

leaning to the ſide of candour and benevolence, is not willing to believe that ſhe ſhall find her new relation unamiable, and undeſerving of her eſteem: I muſt acknowledge, that I fear, from what I can learn of the character and diſpoſition of the *Counteſs*, that ſhe will not highly engage the eſteem of *Lady Campbell*, and that they will be but ineligible companions. I have a yet *greater* dread on my *own* account, and tremble at the thoughts of being introduced to *Lady Aubigny* as the humble dependant of her *Lord's* relation. A poor recluſe too! with ſcarcely an idea but what has been imbibed within the walls of a *convent*; but let me check the ungrateful, the unworthy thought.—Shall I be aſhamed of being the object of *Lady Campbell's* bounty?—of *her* affection? — her compaſſionate tenderneſs?—Shall my proud heart bluſh to owe its happineſs to a mind like *her's? Inſenſate pride!* I baniſh thee my breaſt for ever. Teach me, O Author of beneficence! teach me to know, that benefits, confer-

red by the virtuous and noble-minded, as they reflect honour on thoſe from whom they flow — ſo no leſs do they give dignity to the *obliged.* — To be indebted to the weak, the wicked, or the vain, is, indeed, a miſery; but gratitude to the good is a debt we ſhould glory to acknowledge and pay. Adieu, my ever-loved *Maria*; you may now direct to me with ſome degree of certainty; my addreſs will be *Lord Aubigny's, Pall-Mall.* I do not enjoin you to write ſoon, becauſe I know your readineſs to give pleaſure to your

LAVINIA SEDLEY.

Remember me always, with grateful and reſpectful affection, to the amiable Abbeſs, and aſſure all my former dear companions, that they will live ever in the memory and heart of

SEDLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

Pall-Mall.

NEVER again will I ſuffer myſelf to be prejudiced againſt any one whom I know only by report; the *Lady Aubigny*, whom I ſo much feared, under whoſe roof I expected ſo little ſatisfaction, is the moſt delightful woman in the world; the beauty of her perſon, and the elegance of her manners, tho' ſuperior to even my high raiſed expectations, is yet ſurpaſſed by the graces of her mind, and the charms of her converſation; her kindneſs and attention to me, engage my gratitude and affection, as much as her excellencies and accompliſhments have raiſed my admiration, tho' no ſtranger to the obſcurity of my birth, and dependance on *Lady Campbell*; ſhe

ſhe treats me with the tenderneſs of a ſiſter, and with as much reſpect as if I was the real, and not merely the adopted daughter, of that beſt of women. *Lady Campbell* is charmed with her niece; *Lord Aubigny* received her ladyſhip's compliments on his choice, and her encomiums on the *Counteſs's* perſon and manners, with evident ſelf-complacency; he ſeems infinitely proud of her, and indeed ſhe would in my eſtimation, do honour to a throne; his *Lordſhip*—but I cannot diſmiſs his beauteous *Beatrice* without attempting to give you ſome idea of her perſon, though I am at the ſame time ſenſible that the picture will be far ſhort of the original. She is ſomething above the middle ſize, her form the moſt elegant you can conceive; an admirer of the French ladies would perhaps ſay, ſhe inclined too little on the *embonpoint*, but with me this is not a defect; her complexion is not dazzlingly fair, but perfectly clear, and animated with a natural vermillion, which ſhames the attempts of art; her eyes and eyebrows are dark

dark; the latter beautifully arched; the former "*brilliant as the ſtar of eve*," and ſo truly the index of her ſoul, that ſhe might expreſs by them, every feeling, every thought of her heart, almoſt without the help of language. They are generally with life and vivacity; but never do they look more beautiful than when gliſtening with the tear of tender ſympathy and pity, with which a tale of diſtreſs, or the mention of the unhappy, never fails to fill them. Her noſe is perfectly handſome, according to the *Grecian* model; her mouth ſmall, her teeth the fineſt I ever ſaw, and her ſmile is enchanting: And now to ſpeak of his Lordſhip, with whom, I muſt confeſs, I cannot be equally pleaſed; yet there is nothing objectionable in either his perſon or manners; on the contrary, the former is rather handſome, and the latter perfectly eaſy and polite; but I cannot perſuade myſelf to think very highly of his mental qualifications; nor does he appear to me to poſſeſs any of that ſenſibility of temper which,

which, in her Ladyſhip, is ſo happily blended with the moſt charming vivacity: It is, however, too ſoon, as yet, to form a deciſive judgment, and, indeed, when I reflect that it is the nephew of my honoured *Lady Campbell*, of whom I am ſpeaking thus freely, I feel myſelf inexcuſeable for the impertinence of which I ſuffer my pen to be guilty: But it is to my dear *Maria* that I write, and with her my ſentiments are as ſecurely repoſited as in the inmoſt receſſes of my mind.

My dear benefactreſs has been a little indiſpoſed with a cold, on which account we have not been much from home; but we are going this evening to the *Opera*, and dine to-morrow with a *Lady Meadows* and her family, the particular friends of the *Counteſs*; they have already paid their compliments to *Lady Campbell*. I had not the ſatisfaction of ſeeing them, being on a viſit to *Mrs. Fenton*, of whom you have frequently heard me ſpeak, as particularly kind to me when I was laſt in *England*,

England, and who welcomed my return with a joy which equally pleaſed and affected me.

By a card juſt brought to me, I have the chagrin to find that *Mr. Amyand* is in *England*, in the *metropolis*; he intreats permiſſion to pay his devoirs to *Lady Campbell* and to me: I had believed that the death of his Father would have detained him, for ſometime longer at leaſt, in *Scotland*, and ſometimes even indulged the hope that his increaſe of fortune would diſpoſe him to relinquiſh all thoughts of a girl, who has not only no inheritance of her own to boaſt, but whoſe birth is even unknown; truly ſorry am I to find ſuch hope fallacious. I have a very ſincere eſteem for *Mr. Amyand*, and the utmoſt gratitude for his diſintereſted affection; yet, as I do not, as I fear I ~~cannot~~ shall not ever feel for him any other ſentiment, I cannot but be pained by his perſevering importunity; I am grieved too to diſappoint the wiſhes of my generous protectreſs, who, I fear, intereſts

tereſts herſelf in his ſucceſs: I remain, therefore, uneaſy and irreſolute; while he aſks for no preſent promiſe, demands not my immediate, determinate aſſent; but implores only to be permitted to ſee me, to plead his paſſion, and to indulge the hope that time may at length ſoften me in his favour; nor can I refuſe this his requeſt conſiſtently with the duty which I owe to her, who is entitled, on every occaſion, to exact my obedience to her *commands*, but who uſes ever the mildeſt intreaties alone.—"Your heart, my *Lavinia*, is, you aſſure me, totally free; as a *friend* you regard, you cannot *but* regard, the worthy *Amyand*; do not then haſtily reject his propoſals; *your* boſom will not be the firſt in which eſteem has ripened into love: If, after mature deliberation, you find an union with *Mr. Amyand* to be incompatible with your happineſs, aſſure yourſelf I ſhall never wiſh you to do violence to your inclinations." In this ſtile does ſhe frequently talk to me, while I anſwer her only with my tears; tears, however, which

are

are rather the overflowings of grateful tenderneſs, than of painful emotion, though it muſt be owned, that they are not *wholly* free from the latter.—God bleſs you, my beloved friend; this unexpected card has thrown a damp on my ſpirits; why cannot we love when reaſon would approve?

I am, in every ſtate of mind, my dear *Maria's* unchangeably affectionate,

LAVINIA SEDLEY.

LETTER XXIV.

MISS SEDLEY,

IN

CONTINUATION.

HAVING learnt yeſterday, before I ſealed my letter, that the mail would not go till to-morrow, I deferred the cloſing it till I ſhould be enabled to give you ſome

ſome account of my entertainment at the *Hay-market*, and of our viſit in *St. James's Square*. To the *Opera* we were attended by *Mr. Amyand*; the houſe is ſo much improved ſince I laſt ſaw it, that I could ſcarce believe I had been ever in it before. I encloſe you a plan of it, which will give you a far more adequate idea of its elegance and accommodation, than I could poſſibly convey to you by deſcription. Although *Operas* are a ſpecies of entertainment, for which, I muſt, *bluſhingly*, confeſs, I have leſs predilection than for the *Engliſh Drama*, I could not, you will believe, be otherwiſe than delighted by the harmonious ſtrains of *Mara* and *Rubinelli*, who certainly far excel any ſingers that I have ever yet heard; and the unbounded applauſe they received from an audience equally crowded and brilliant, gave proof that my ſentiments, of their inimitable powers, were not ſingular, or erroneous: Of the ~~ballads~~ Italian I have little to ſay; thoſe who

who have been charmed by the unrivalled grace, elegance, nature and ſpirit, of a *Roſſi*, a *Le Picq*, in the ballet of "*Medea and Jaſon*," and "*The Deſerter*," will receive little pleaſure from the exertions of very inferior talents; the abſence of *Baccelli*, this ſeaſon, from the theatre is likewiſe much to be regretted; I ſaw nothing nearly comparable to this elegant dancer, who you know to be a great favourite with me.

We were ſcarce ſeated in the box, which on the review of the encloſed plan you will know for *Lady Aubigney's*, when my eyes were attracted, by the fineſt male figure I had ever beheld, in that nearly oppoſite; never had I ſeen an air ſo noble, ſo manly, yet ſo faſhionably elegant; he bowed to the *Counteſs*; "*Sir Edward Meadows*," ſaid ſhe to *Lady Campbell*, and in a few ſeconds *Sir Edward* came into the box, her ladyſhip looked pleaſed at his entrance, and received him with the eaſy freedom of an intimate acquaintance; *Lady Campbell*,

bell, Miſs Sedley, ſaid ſhe, my Lady, *Sir Edward Meadows*, he bowed reſpectfully to each.—If before I admired his perſon, I was now charmed with the graceful eaſe, and politeneſs of his addreſs, and the ſpirit of his converſation, for he ſcarce quitted us the whole evening; ſeveral other beaus came between the acts to pay their devoirs to the *Counteſs*, who ſeemed indeed the object of univerſal attention and admiration. The *Opera* ended, we adjourned to the Coffee Room, where we were obliged to wait near an hour before the carriage could draw up, which I did not at all regret, being very agreeably engaged in contemplating the elegant figures, and beautiful faces that ſurrounded me; the beauteous *Beatrice* however eclipſed them all; and when at laſt, her coach was announced in waiting, many were the competitors for the honour of her hand, which was however, conferred on *Sir Edward*. "This gentleman then," ſaid *Lady Campbell*, as we drove off, addreſſing herſelf to the *Counteſs*, "is the ſon of your

your friend, *Lady Meadows*; he is a fine young man," purſued ſhe, "and has ſomething in his manner that is peculiarly engaging. You will be much pleaſed with the whole family," anſwered her *ladyſhip*, "when you have ſeen more of them; to know is to love and to eſteem them." "If ſuch is the caſe in reſpect to *Sir Edward*, at leaſt," ſaid *Mr. Amyand*, ſmiling, "what rivalſhips, what uneaſineſs muſt he not have been the occaſion of; and ſhould not your *ladyſhip*, be rather induſtrious to diſſuade your friends from, than adviſe them to, the cultivation of an acquaintance ſo confeſſedly dangerous?" "your acceptation of the word *love*." replied the *Counteſs*, gaily, "is not I perceive exactly conſonant to the ſenſe in which I have meant to uſe it; I would wiſh *indeed*, carefully to guard againſt every thing that might tend to the diſquiet of my friends; but I flatter myſelf I ſhall not endanger their happineſs by introducing them to the knowledge of this worthy and reſpectable family." The coach now ſtopped

ſtopped and *Mr. Amyand* took his leave; ſoon after we retired to our appartments; this whole day we have ſpent in *St. James's Square*; well might *Lady Aubigny* ſay of her friends, that to *know* was to *love* them; *Lady Meadows* appears to me, next to my dear patroneſs, the moſt amiable of women; ſhe has two daughters; the eldeſt of whom is extremely beautiful, and ſeems to poſſeſs much ſweetneſs of temper; I think if ſhe has a fault, it is that of being too ſilent and reſerved; but *Charlotte*, tho' no beauty is from her good humoured vivacity, and the frankneſs of her diſpoſition, quite enchanting; ſo is *Sir Edward*. Since I left the *Convent*, I have not ſpent a day ſo happily as this; how generouſly delicate was the manner in which *Lady Aubigny* introduced me to this family of harmony and affection; "my dear madam," ſaid ſhe, to *Lady Meadows*, kindly taking my hand as ſhe ſpoke, "give me leave to preſent to you *Miſs Sedley*, the ward of *Lady Campbell*, and my newly acquired friend, *Miſs Meadows*.—*Charlotte*,

I bring you *another* ſiſter; do not be alarmed," ſaid ſhe, ſmiling " at the rapid encreaſe of your relations; but gratefully acknowledge your obligations to me for the *two* which *I* have given to you:" they all ſaluted me with an affectionate politeneſs, and I could obſerve, that my dear parent (for ſo I muſt call her) was highly ſatisfied with the agreeable manner in which her charming niece had recommended me to the friendſhip of theſe her ſelect favourites. In a few minutes *Sir Edward* entered the room; *Charlotte* was ſitting with me on the ſame ſopha. " *Sir Edward*, ſaid ſhe, as he addreſſed himſelf to me, " ſee what an impertinent *Beatrice* is become; not content with having impoſed *herſelf* on us, and by force of merit, charms, and ſuch like lawleſs means, compelling us to love, and to adopt her for our own; ſhe has brought to us another Syren, and I already foreſee that ſhe will rob us of all the hearts her ladyſhip has left us.—" *Lady Aubigny*," ſaid *Sir Edward*, with a graceful gaiety, " is indeed in *herſelf* but too powerful; yet,

however needleſs auxiliaries, *Miſs Sedley*," bowing to me as he ſpoke; "is an acquiſition for which I am perſuaded we ſhall be all equally grateful:" "Ah, I told you ſo," ſaid the ſprightly *Charlotte*, "between them both, we ſhall not have a grain of affection to ſpare to the reſt of the female world." "But brother," purſued ſhe, in rather a lowered tone, and looking ſteadfaſtly in his fine face, took my hand, kindly preſſing it, "know you too that *Miſs Sedley*, ~~ſhe~~ is our ſiſter, the ſiſter of *Lady Aubigny*, will you not be proud of the title of her brother?" he bluſhed—why he *ſhould* do ſo I cannot tell, but his cheeks certainly confeſſed an unuſual glow;—"moſt certainly I ſhould be ſo, replied he," with an air a little embaraſſed, from which however he almoſt immediately recovered himſelf; may I hope," added he, taking the ſeat which *Charlotte* at that moment quitted to ſpeak to the *Counteſs*, that *Miſs Sedley* will permit me to rank myſelf, amongſt the number of her friends; on ſo ſhort an acquaintance, I cannot preſume to

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aſk that ſhe ſhould look on me as a *brother*—the time, I will flatter myſelf, may come when ſhe will deign ſo to conſider me; I never in my life, my dear *Rivers*, felt ſo aukwardly confuſed, what poſſeſſed me I know not, but ſo univerſal a tremor ſeized my nerves, that it was not without difficulty I, after half a minute ſilence, articulated a ſomething in reply.

Lady Ann Maynell was now announced, and was ſoon followed by a *Mr. Foreſt*; a very genteel agreeable young man, who as I am ſince informed, is ſoon to be married to the engaging *Charlotte*; of her *ladyſhip*, I have only to remark, that ſhe is a fine piece of ſtill life, her features are regularly beautiful; but ſo void of animation, that the eye is fatigued with beholding her; ſhe is ſaid to be good tempered, *eaſy*, and *placid*, at leaſt, I cannot doubt, for ſhe ſeems to be incapable of exertion. In the evening other company came in, but withdrew ſoon after eleven, as did *Lord Aubigny*, who pleaded an indiſpenſible engagement; our

party ſtaid till near three, and had probably remained till the uſual hour of breakfaſt, but for *Lady Campbell*, who was obliged to intimate three ſeveral times, that it was *almoſt* the reaſonable hour of departure, before the hint was effective; ſo entirely ſatisfied did every one ſeem with their ſituation. We ſeparated however, at length, and here am I at half paſt four in the morning, ſcribbling to you; when my eyes undeniably prove to me that I ought long ſince to have reſigned myſelf to my pillow.

Farewell, my dear *Rivers*, delay not to aſſure me that you ſtill love your

LAVINIA SEDLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

LORD AUBIGNY

TO

COLONEL EGREMONT.

YOU ſurprize me *Egremont*. What *you!* a man of the *world!* a man of gallantry! aſtoniſhed at the inconſtancy of a huſband. And why? my wife forſooth is handſome, elegant, and accompliſhed;—then I married for *love*.—true, but the beauty I ſighed for has been long enough in my poſſeſſion to become indifferent to me; and of what has her *Ladyſhip* to complain? The tranſient paſſion ſhe had the good fortune to inſpire, has ſecured to her, all that her wiſhes aſpired to; equipage, title, and ſplendor. But you have diſcovered that ſhe has a *heart*;—and that by proper management and attention, I might have made myſelf the maſter of this wonderous treaſure. Gratitude you ſay would have

warmed into affection; and I might have had indeed ſomething to boaſt of, in the poſſeſſion of the heart and perſon of ſo amiable and ſo lovely a creature.—Upon my ſoul *Egremont*, your phraſes are of late, become ſo obſolete and uncouth, that I do not know what to make of thee;—ſo much art thou altered, or ſo different a fellow art thou from what thou hadſt hitherto appeared to me. The lovely little *Syren* on whom thou art ſo ſevere, is ſo little ſuſpicious of thy diſaffection, that ſhe profeſſes herſelf quite chagrined at thy intended abſence from the propoſed *petit ſouper* on Sunday next. She is a divine girl *Egremont*, and thou art a very churl to ſpeak ſo contemptuouſly of her charms. She is all captivation, and I fly to tell her ſo for the thouſandth time.——Ever thine,

AUBIGNY.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

LADY SEYMOUR

TO

LADY AUBIGNY.

Mordaunt-Caſtle.

I Seize the firſt moment of leiſure to give my dear *Beatrice*, the information of our ſafe arrival at *Mordaunt Caſtle*; as well as to beg your excuſe for my not writing before our departure from —— *Hall*; and as I have much to offer on my own behalf, when we meet, I ſhall not ſuffer myſelf to doubt your forgiveneſs. I believe I omitted to mention to you in my laſt, that *Mrs. Willis* was to accompany us in this our mountainous excurſion: we have likewiſe in our party a *Mr. Herbert*, who as the intimate friend of my dear *Sir Charles*, was to have been preſent at our marriage; but was delayed by the indiſpoſition of a near relation; he is a very

ſenſible, agreeable man, and as I have before obſerved, that he is the friend of my *Seymour*, you may be aſſured poſſeſſes no ſmall ſhare of my eſteem and regard. The lovely widow, I will never credit appearances, feels for him a ſentiment yet more lively; nor does ſhe diſtinguiſh an ingrate; the joy that ſparkled in *his* eyes, the glow of pleaſure that vermillioned *her* cheeks, and the viſible embaraſſment of both at their meeting, were pretty evident ſymptoms that indifference reigned not in the breaſt of either. You muſt not expect long letters from hence; where I ſhall have little time that I may call my own; at this moment they bring me a meſſage from *Mrs. Morton* and *Sir Charles*, requeſting me to join them in taking a review of the park, &c. What will you not have to anſwer for, if you are the occaſion in me, of the firſt act of diſobedience to my *lord* and *maſter?* however unreaſonable you may think me, I muſt entreat that you will not let the brevity of *my* epiſtles be the example of *your's*; I ſhall live in daily expecta-

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tion of hearing that you are well and happy, of being introduced to *Lady Campbell*, and her fair ward, and to the lover of the good-humoured *Charlotte*, whoſe affection for you ſecures to her as much of mine as yourſelf, and a few other encroachers have left me to beſtow. I am likewiſe intereſted for *Lady Ann Maynell*, whoſe unfortunate partiality, may too probably render her future life, if not unhappy, yet joyleſs and inſipid.

Every day's obſervation, my dear *Beatrice*, more fully evinces the importance and neceſſity, of placing the ſtricteſt guard over our paſſions; and of keeping our hearts with all diligence; perhaps few of the miſeries which love have occaſioned, would have had their exiſtence but from the want of this ſelf attention, which renders vain the "*ſtill voice of reaſon*," whoſe aid we ſeldom ſolicit, till the hour is paſt in which her efforts could have been ſufficient. In the caſe of *Lady Ann* indeed, it might not appear neceſſary to combat ſen-

timents of affection, which neither virtue nor prudence ſeemed to oppoſe; the object was amiable, the ſanction of parents on both ſides, and even their warm wiſhes, authorized her inclinations; her young heart, under ſuch circumſtances, might therefore be eaſily ſeduced, ere ſhe had time to perceive that her tenderneſs was not returned, or to reflect how painful to a woman of delicacy muſt be the conſciouſneſs of cheriſhing a partiality unwiſhed for, and unſolicited by him, who had involuntarily inſpired it. I am willing then to hope that *Charlotte* is miſtaken in her conjectures; and that I ſhall hereafter hear of an union between her ladyſhip and *Sir Edward*, as equally in conſequence of their reciprocal regard, as in deference to the earneſt deſires of their reſpective families. It was my intention to have ſaid ſomething to you, on the little regard you pay to your health; but I have only time to intreat that you would be leſs inconſiderate in future. The good folks are impatient.

patient. They oblige me to conclude, after aſſuring you that I am, and ſhall be ever your tenderly affectionate,

HENRIETTA SEYMOUR.

LETTER XXVI.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

LADY SEYMOUR.

Pall Mall.

ARTFUL girl! you can ſay much in your behalf *when we meet*; it is an acknowledgement indeed that you merit a ſevere chiding, when you think it neceſſary to have recourſe to ſo ſure a ſoftner of my heart; thoſe magic words, *when we meet*, have melted every growing ſenſation of anger and diſcontent, into all the tenderneſs of wiſhing friendſhip, which impatiently longs for the happy moment

of our re-union.—*Lady Campbell* having accepted an invitation from the *Woodburn's*, her tenants at *Auburn Place*, and intending to ſpend ſome weeks with them; I have engaged to accompany the *Meadows's* to *Bath*, and as *Miſs Sedley* has never ſeen that place, her ladyſhip has readily conſented to her being of our party;—*Miſs Sedley* is a ſweet engaging girl; and it is next to impoſſible to converſe with her, without feeling an affection which intereſts you in her welfare and concerns—but I am talking to you of theſe my new gueſts, before I have properly introduced them to you; they have been with me near a fortnight, and are a real acquiſition to me and to my friends. *Lady Campbell* is of nearly the ſame age with *Lady Meadows*, and not unlike her, either in perſon or manners; I already feel for her the affection of a relation, and if I do not flatter myſelf, ſhe does not find me at leaſt *leſs* agreeable to her than ſhe had expected me to be; we ſeem indeed hitherto equally ſatisfied with each other. *Lavinia Sedley* is a lovely girl, of eighteen,

eighteen, elegantly formed, and if her features are not regularly beautiful, they poſſeſs an uncommon ſhare of ſweetneſs and ſenſibility; her complexion is delicate, her eyes are blue, her hair the lighteſt auburn, her mouth prettily formed, and her teeth white and even; her manners are like her perſon, truly feminine and engaging; ſhe appears frank and ingenuous; but has a penſiveneſs in her air, as well as in the whole character of her countenance, not uſually ſeen at her age; and the diſpoſition of her mind ſeems naturally of a ſerious bent; not that ſhe is unchearful, it can only be ſaid that ſhe has not that *gaiety* of temper which uſually marks the firſt ſeaſons of youth: ſome affair of the heart, perhaps you will ſay, may occaſion this appearance of a ſerious diſpoſition; but I rather think it is the reſult of native temper, inherited perhaps from her mother; who, by ſome expreſſions which have dropped from *Lady Campbell*, I ſuſpect to have been unhappy in her marriage; and I the rather ſuppoſe this, as I have never heard

heard any mention of her, (*Lavinia*'s) father, who could not have been many months dead, when *Mrs. Sedley* expired in child-birth of this her only daughter; there ſeems therefore ſome myſtery in the hiſtory of her parents, which her ladyſhip, from proper motives, no doubt, ſeems not inclined to enter into, of the merit of the unfortunate lady, the friendſhip of *Lady Campbell*, ſo inconteſtibly evinced in her real *maternal* tenderneſs to *Lavinia*, is an unequivocal proof, and her ſweet orphan, I dare believe will not prove leſs amiable.

We have been very domeſtic ſince the arrival of my new friends; her ladyſhip having been a little indiſpoſed, we have lived chiefly *en famille* with the *Meadows's*, in *St. James's-ſquare*, or in *Pall Mall*. *Lady Campbell* and *Miſs Sedley* are equally delighted with this agreeable family, and the approbation is reciprocal; I have entirely recovered my health and ſpirits; the good old people are ſafely arrived at *the dear old manſion*; poor *Lucy* has written a pathetic

pathetic letter, lamenting her wretched change, for ſo ſhe terms it, and confeſſing in every line her envy of me, whom ſhe ſtiles her *happy*, *happy* couſin; but I hope a little time will again reconcile her to a ſituation, which at preſent ſhe muſt not think of quitting.

I will not *always* write longer letters than other people, ſay and think as you pleaſe; this morning I have promiſed to attend my young friend to her millener, and the carriage now waits; the choice of a cap is of more importance than any thing I at this moment can find further to ſay to you; after excepting the due compliments to *Mrs. Morton* and *Sir Charles*, for it is by no means neceſſary to ſay how much I am your's.

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XXVII.

SIR EDWARD MEADOWS

TO

MR. PEMBERTON.

St. James's Square.

WHY did you leave me *Pemberton?* why cruelly withdraw yourſelf at a time when I could ſo ill diſpenſe with your abſence? never has there been an hour in my life in which I ſo much needed the councils, the admonitions, the guide of a *Mentor*, as that in which you have left me: this enchanting *Aubigny*! Why did I ever ſee her? Why, when I *had* ſeen her, did I not at once comprehend the magnitude of my danger, and fly her preſence for ever? now it is too late, I live but in her ſight; the day is loſt in the journal of my exiſtence, which is paſſed without ſeeing her, yet you talk to me of *Lady Ann Maynell*; *Lady Meadows* too

too cannot yet relinquiſh hopes which I never encouraged her to form. I acknowledge *Lady Ann's* beauty, and doubt not her merits; but the negative character of her virtues, the taſteleſs inſipidity of her converſation, and the ſtill-life equanimity of her temper, have no charms for me; I would not be wedded to inanimation, I think not of marrying indeed at all; I have ſeen but *one* woman in the world to whom I could have ever wiſhed to have been united, and that "*diſtinguiſhed one*" is already the wife of a man, who knows not her value. I will not therefore hear of marriage; I have talked ſo much to *Lady Meadows* within theſe few days, of my inſuperable averſion to her projected match, that ſhe has, at laſt, promiſed to ſay no more to me on the ungrateful ſubject; yet I am ſorry to ſee that it gives her no ſmall pain to relinquiſh a point which has been long, I believe, the darling wiſh of her heart; as to the beauteous inanimate, ſhe has left town; and I ſincerely hope I ſhall never ſee her more; incapable as I find

find myſelf of doing juſtice to her charms. I know I ſhall incur freſh reproaches from you, when I tell you I am going in the family party to *Bath*, in which *Beatrice* is included, together with a *Miſs Sedley*, an orphan under the protection of his lordſhip's aunt, *Lady Campbell*, who have been both in *Pall-Mall* ſince, within a few days of your departure; but O *Pemberton*, how can I do otherwiſe? when herſelf has deigned to aſk my attendance; her ~~tongue~~ eyes indeed ~~was~~ were ſilent; but when *Louiſa* aſked if *I* would not accompany them, her *ſpeaking eyes*, and *their language* is ever unequivocal, joined in the demand, and could not but procure an immediate, a grateful *affirmative*.

What a delightful month ſhall I not paſs? I can ſcarcely credit my ſenſes, which promiſe me ſo much felicity; to be a whole month under the very ſame roof with the adored of my heart! daily, hourly to ſee her, to converſe with her, without reſtraint! was it in nature to refuſe

fuſe ſo much offered happineſs? you yourſelf, *Pemberton*, though your heart no more can feel the power of love; you yourſelf acknowledge her unequalled charms; anſwer then the queſtion for me. Was it then in the line of poſſibility for a temper ſenſible as mine to practiſe ſuch, ſurely unneceſſary, ſelf denial? write to me, my dear friend, but ſpeak not of my relinquiſhing a felicity ſo great, ſo unhoped for; it is not to be thought of. I can write no longer. I hear a voice in *Charlotte's* dreſſing-room, which I have not heard theſe two days, that is, a century.—Farewell,

EDWARD MEADOWS.

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

MR. PEMBERTON.

TO

SIR EDWARD MEADOWS.

Oak-Hill.

TO what purpoſe ſhould I write to you, *Meadows?* my advice you have already heard in vain, and ſeem ſtill determined to reject. My letters, or my ſociety muſt be equally uſeleſs, unwelcome, and intruding, ſince I can neither write to, nor could converſe with you, and not endeavour at convincing you of both the folly and the crime you are guilty of, in the indulgence of a paſſion ſo injurious to its object, and to the laws of ſociety; ſo repugnant to honour, and to every chriſtian principle. How is it, my friend, that in ſo ſhort a ſpace of time, you can have brought yourſelf to deviate ſo far from that rule of right, which uſed to actuate

tuate your whole conduct? recollect the converſations we have had together, on this ſubject; what would at that time have been your ſentiments of a man purſuing the mode of conduct you now have adopted; would you not have marked him as deſerving the ſevereſt cenſure? Would you not have declared him incapable of true affection for the woman whom he profeſſed to love? while by ſeducing her affections from her huſband, and rendering *him*, who *perhaps might* not have been the entire choice of her heart; the object, too probably, of her hatred and diſguſt, he embittered the future moments of her life, and deſtroyed, for ever, her fame, her innocence, and her repoſe;—I know what you muſt feel, while conſcience forces from you the anſwer by which you ſtand ſelf-condemned. Notwithſtanding, therefore, the little encouragement given me by your laſt letter, to attempt any longer the reſcue of your reaſon and your principles, from the fatal deluſion in which miſguided paſſion has involved them; the tender friendſhip I

bear

bear you, impels me to make yet one effort more to ſave you from the miſery which is ever the infallible conſequence of guilt; if this laſt hope fails me, I muſt, however reluctantly, leave you to your fate, and ſubmit, myſelf, to the aggravation of thoſe afflictions, which I once thought could not have been encreaſed—. Once again then, my dear *Meadows*, I conjure you attentively to liſten to one, whom, alas! ſevere experience has but too well qualified to ſet before you, the ſure and dreadful conſequences of faſhionable diſſipation, and unlicenced paſſion. You have frequently aſked me the hiſtory of my life, and the cauſe of that melancholy, which neither the lenient hand of time, nor the tendereſt attentions of aſſiduous friendſhip, have been able to remove; hitherto I have refuſed to grant any more to your entreaties than the acknowledgement that it was, as you ſuſpected, the conſequence of an ill-fated paſſion; my torn ſoul could not ſupport the thought of entering into a minute detail

tail; of retracing the ſorrowing ſcenes of former days; of the times long ſince elapſed; of its paſt agonizing woes; and it needed all the, *almoſt paternal*, regard I entertain for you, to have conquered the repugnance it yet feels, to travel again over the wide field of its miſeries:—it is now ſome time, ſince finding your importunity (which, I am fully convinced, proceeded from the kindeſt of motives, a hope that the grief ſo evidently preying on my heart, might be leſſened by communicating its ſorrows to a ſympathyzing friend) of no other avail than to encreaſe the penſive diſpoſition of my mind; have ceaſed to urge me on a ſubject ſo ungrateful to my recollection; but at this time, when I wiſh to ſet before you, in the ſtrongeſt light, the guilt into which a thoughtleſs ſecurity may too probably plunge you, and the agonizing reflections which will too ſurely force themſelves on your mind, when regret and repentance will be in vain;—I feel myſelf impelled by the moſt ſerious conſiderations, and even conſider

ſider it as a debt due to that friendſhip which alone has had the power of alleviating thoſe ſorrows, which the grave only can utterly extinguiſh; to reveal to you the ſecret of my ſoul, and readily ſubmit to ſhew myſelf to you, as leſs worthy than I dare believe you have hitherto thought me of your eſteem; that *you*, warned in the perſonal example of a friend, may learn to avoid the rock, on which *his* every earthly hope has been ſhipwrecked, and his peace of mind loſt for ever.

Near twenty years have now elapſed ſince the fatal era from whence I date my miſeries; I was then on a viſit at *Sir W. A's.* in *Nottinghamſhire*; whoſe houſe I was on the point of quitting, when the appearance of a lovely female viſitor altered my reſolves; ſhe was the niece of a neighbouring gentleman of reſpectable, though not of *great* family, of French extraction, but of ſmall fortune; with whom, and under the immediate eye of an accompliſhed woman, his wife, ſhe had been brought up from her

her infancy, having been left an orphan in that early period of her life. The amiable manners, good ſenſe, and admirable character of the worthy *Montauban's*, not only procured them admiſſion into, but rendered their ſociety courted by the firſt families in their neighbourhood. As to their lovely, young, and blooming *Clara*, ſhe was at once the admiration and delight of all who knew her; beauty and innocence glowed in her every feature; gentleneſs, ſweetneſs, and complacency beamed from her eyes; her heart was the ſeat of every virtue; the graces dwelt in her form, from the moment I beheld, I liked and admired her, but when I had converſed with her, and found her mind as perfect as her form, I at once adored and deſpaired. The diſparity of our birth and fortune, would be invincible obſtacles with my father, to a union ſo deſtructive to his higher hopes; than him, no man living poſſeſſed a greater ſeverity of temper; an higher ambition, or a greater lover of wealth, nor would my own pride, (execra-

ble and too late deteſted folly) permit me to *wiſh* her mine, on terms, as I then abſurdly thought, ſo derogatory to my birth and expectations; theſe conſiderations however, which ought to have induced me to fly her preſence, and to have ſecured by abſence, both my own honour and her dearer peace, had no weight with a heart whoſe better diſpoſitions were all loſt in the impetuoſity of youthful, and violent paſſion. I conſidered no longer any thing but its blind dictates, and bent myſelf wholly to the purſuit of its gratification, without ſuffering myſelf to reflect on the cruelty, the ignominy of my conduct, in endeavouring to ſeduce the unexperienced innocence of a heart which was framed alone for virtue;—but let me be brief—my unremitted endeavours to engage the affections of the beauteous villager, were fatally ſucceſsful; for me ſhe conſented to abandon her peaceful, happy home, her affectionate relatives, and reſt her future hopes of felicity on my honour, my fidelity, and my love. Ah! dear, ill-

fated

fated *Clara?* why hadſt thou not ſtill relied on theſe? And couldſt thou think, endeared, daily, hourly, endeared, to my fond ſoul by thy ſtill encreaſing charms of mind and perſon, by the thouſand nameleſs tenderneſſes and attentions, of a love equally delicate, and exceſſive.—Ah! couldſt thou think, that, or wealth, or fame, or ambition, or parental authority, could ever teach me to forget thee, or to loſe in the arms of another, the remembrance of thy inexpreſſive ſweetneſs, thy exalted love?—I cannot as yet proceed.

The tears that have ~~followed~~ flowed, that *ſhould* forever flow, to the memory of my injured *Clara*, (now perhaps an angel in Heaven) have given ſome relief to my oppreſſed ſoul; and I will endeavour to continue a narration to which I had thought myſelf more equal—She fled with me to——— in ~~Lorania,~~ where we remained near twelve months; at the expiration of which time I received orders from my father, to attend him in *England*—He was then in *London*.

We returned together, and I took a houſe ſome miles from town, it being the wiſh of my dear *Clara* to live in perfect retirement, my will was ever correſpondent with her's, we lived indeed only for each other, nor did we ever frame a wiſh for any of the amuſements of the gay world, or ſigh for any other ſociety,

" *Whilſt, with each other bleſt, creative love,*
Still bade eternal Eden *ſmile around.*"

But alas! ſhort were the duration of theſe days of happineſs; *Mr.* and *Mrs. Montauban*, ſurvived but a few months, the deſertion of their beloved *Clara*, and the intelligence of their deaths, which could not be for any time concealed from her, after our return to *England*, threw her into ſuch an extreme dejection of mind, that I began to tremble for her life; her ſituation at this time, being ſuch as rendered any purturbation of mind to be peculiarly dreaded for her. It was at this juncture that

that my *Father* acquainted me with his views, demanding my return to *England*; which was not, he ſaid, merely to gratify *himſelf* by my preſence; that he had been for ſome time deſirous of ſeeing me ſettled in life; and had at length concluded for me a very honourable alliance; to which as it was impoſſible that I could raiſe the ſmalleſt objection; as I muſt on the contrary, be fully perſuaded of his tenderneſs for me, by his attention as well to the perſonal charms, and accompliſhments of her whom he had choſen for me; as to the advancement of my fortune and conſequence in the world, he could make no doubt of my obeying his commands, with grateful alacrity, when he told me that *Lady Betty H* —— was ~~the lady~~ her of whom I was deſtined to be the happy huſband.

It were needleſs to dwell on what muſt have been my emotions during this harrangue; my father either perceived them not, or attributed them to a different cauſe. He knew my ſentiments of *Lady*

Betty H—— to be ſuch as her beauty and merit could not but produce in the minds of all who had the honour to know her; and therefore, the poſſibility of any diſinclination on my part to fulfil the engagement he had thought proper to make in my name.—He was no ſtranger indeed to the connexion ſubſiſting between me and the beauteous *Clara*, though he knew not the particulars of her ſtory; but my father was too much the faſhionable man of the world to conceive that this circumſtance could prove any bar to his wiſhes; and as he never entertained of me a ſuſpicion that I could deſcend, as he would have called it, to marry any woman of inferior birth or fortune, he was perfectly at eaſe reſpecting the attachment which he underſtood me to have formed. I knew indeed my father's temper too well, to think of mentioning ſuch attachment as an obſtacle to compliance with his deſire, and left his apartment in an agitation of mind, much more eaſily to be imagined than deſcribed. It was in vain that I endeavoured to conceal

ceal from my beloved *Clara* the conflicts of my ſoul; ſhe implored, entreated, inſiſted on my revealing to her the cauſe of my agitated ſpirits, with an earneſtneſs of importunity, that at length overpowered my reſolution, and wreſted from me the diſtracting ſecret; ſhe bore the cruel intelligence with a fortitude and calmneſs which aſtoniſhed me; and anſwered my proteſtations of eternal conſtancy, and my aſſurances that I would ſooner die, than conſent to form any ties that ſhould oblige me to deſert *her*, for whom alone life was worth my care; with tears of tenderneſs, which melted my very ſoul, I parted from her, (for buſineſs required my return to town) with a promiſe that I would employ the time of abſence in conſidering how beſt to amuſe my father, till ſome favourable occaſion ſhould preſent itſelf, entirely to fruſtrate a ſcheme ſo incompatible with our mutual happineſs.—She ſmiled through her tears, yet methought it was an agonizing ſmile, as I fondly preſſed her to my boſom; whilſt ſolemnly I ſwore that

no power on earth ſhould part us; and with a look at once of love and of anguiſh, which ſhe vainly endeavoured to conceal, ſhe preſſed my hand to her lips with a fervency which I even yet ſeem to feel; while the ſad ſolemnity of her adieu yet vibrates on my ear; a preſentiment of what was to follow, had ſurely at that moment ſeized me; for I was totally unable to ſpeak in return; but after again tenderly embracing her—ruſhed out of her apartment, utterly overpowered by a variety of conflicting emotions. But gracious God! what pen can deſcribe the agonies of my ſoul, when on my return to the houſe, two days after, I found her abſent; and in the place of her whom my heart adored, this fatal billet.

MISS MONTAUBAN,

TO

MR. PEMBERTON.

(Incloſed in the preceding.)

ACCUSE me not, my ever loved *Pemberton*; accuſe me not of cruelty, in thus abruptly withdrawing myſelf from the arms of him, who alone will reign for ever in my heart: Had I waited your return, my own weakneſs, joined to your remonſtrances and entreaties, had, perhaps, put it out of my power to act as both our intereſts *(your* happineſs *more particularly)* demand that I ſhould.—Too well I know how little oppoſition my better knowledge, and the dictates both of reaſon and of conſcience, would enable me to make to the perſuaſive arguments of love—from the firſt and only object of my warmeſt and moſt ardent affection.—Alas! my adored *Huſband*; (permit me

this once to call you by that ſacred name) I have long, *very long*, foreſeen the day, when our ſeparation would be neceſſary, would be unavoidable; it is time that you ſhould conſider what is due to yourſelf, to your family; and by complying with the commands of your father, reſtore to ſociety a valuable member, whoſe life was not given him to be paſſed in reproachful obſcurity. That *your* honour and happineſs have been ever dearer to me than *my own*, you have received too convincing proofs to need now any aſſurances on that ſubject; how then could I bear to know myſelf the cauſe of your infelicity and diſgrace?—to be the unhappy occaſion of drawing on you the reſentment of a father, and the ſarcaſms of an unfeeling, and hard-judging world.

From the fatal moment in which I conſented to abandon thoſe friends, to whom I was bound by every tie of gratitude and duty, and of natural affection, I have never taſted a pleaſure unmixed with

with bitterneſs and regret; and ſince their releaſe from a world, out of which my ill-conduct too evidently hurried them, I have not been able to conceal, from you, the ſufferings of my mind, which, not even *your* loved ſociety, and unabating tenderneſs could conquer.—Think not, my deareſt *Pemberton*, that I repeat this to upbraid you; I have, alas! no cauſe; my own weakneſs, rather than to your ſeductions, I feel the ſacrifice: It is yet in your power to reſtore to me, in ſome degree, the peace of which my tenderneſs for you has robbed me, by reſigning yourſelf to the will of your father.—I have heard frequent mention of *Lady Betty H*———, and rejoice to know that ſhe will deſerve you: You, yourſelf, acknowledge her to be amiable; ſhe *muſt* make you happy.—Reſolve, then, to be ſo, and leave me to expiate, by a life of ſolitude and penitence, the crimes of which love has made me guilty.——We meet no more, my deareſt *Pemberton!* Cruel as you will call me—great as the

declaration coſts me, I muſt repeat it— We meet no more. — Say not that I love no longer; ah! rather be aſſured that the moſt ardent, the higheſt affection alone, could enable me to reſign you to another. Knew you, my *Henry*, the agonies I at this moment ſuffer, you would not reproach, but pity and acquit me. But let me not ſoften you to unprofitable tenderneſs; you muſt now live for another, and endeavour to forget that ſuch a perſon as your *Clara* ever exiſted.—Forget! ſaid I, alas! that is too much: Can I then bear to live loſt to your remembrance? Forgive me, virtue, that I cannot wiſh it. Think of me then, my dear *Pemberton*, a friend, whoſe errors you lament, in whoſe fate you ſympathize; and ſtill retain for me ſome ſentiments of eſteem and regard; but at the ſame time remember, that every more tender ſentiment will be ſoon *her* due, who it will be my conſtant and earneſt prayers, may render you as happy as you deſerve, and as I wiſh you to be.

Be

Be not unhappy for my ſafety, or ſituation; the little pittance bequeathed to me by my father, and which you know has been remitted to me, will be ſufficient to ſupply me with all the neceſſaries, and even with ſome of the indulgences of life; with all, in ſhort, that can be requiſite in the very retired ſituation in which I ſhall henceforth chuſe to live.

Aggravate not the uneaſineſs which I too well know will be to you the conſequence of my flight, in the firſt moments of your ſurprize and diſappointment, by a vain purſuit, or endeavours to diſcover the place of my retreat; they would be fruitleſs.——If the unfortunate pledge of tender, but ill-fated affection, ſhould ſurvive its birth; my faithful *Hannah* (and it will be ſome little ſatisfaction to you, to know that I am attended by one, whoſe fidelity and attention to me you will be ſo aſſured of;) who is my companion, ſhall, herſelf, bear to you the depoſit.—It would be to wrong the delicacy, as well

as

as the ſtrength and ſincerity of your love, to recommend to you the carefully preſerving the ſecret of its birth; and to entreat your cheriſhing it with the ſame tenderneſs, which, had fate permitted, had ſo greatly bleſſed its unhappy mother; to her, indeed, it will be like a ſecond parting with the dear author of its birth; yet ſhall no feminine weakneſs deprive it of the bleſſing of that paternal love and protection, which my ſoul knows will be afforded by my *Henry* to the precious charge committed by his *Clara* to his care. You ſhall then be made acquainted with the aſylum I ſhall have choſen, where to paſs my future days, in the daily, hourly taſk; ah! taſk delightful of imploring bleſſings on my *Pemberton*; on her who ſhall ſhare his pleaſures and his pains; whoſe goodneſs, gentleneſs, and affection, ſhall encreaſe his every joy, and leſſen his every ſorrow. — Yes, my loved *Henry*, even though exiled from *you*, I may yet, in this world, taſte again of happineſs, if *you* obſtinately daſh not from you the cup

cup of felicity, now offered to your acceptance. — The merciful Father of the univerſe will accept the ſacrifice we offer to his offended laws. — He will receive our repentant ſighs. — We ſhall live tranquil, and expire in hope. — *Henry*, I know not how to ſay adieu; yet why ſhould I write on, ſince a return of reaſon, and cool reflection, will, more than any thing I can urge, alleviate your griefs, and draw from you an acknowledgment of the neceſſity of the ſtep, which could alone reſtore you to youſelf. — O *Pemberton!* ſtill, for ever, too much beloved; I feel your anguiſh in my own. —— My heart ſuſpends its ſorrows to weep thoſe of yours. — *Farewell!* deareſt and moſt beloved of men, *farewell!* a tear will blot the words *for ever!*

CLARA MONTAUBAN.

MR. PEMBERTON IN CONTINUATION.

You have read the incloſed, *Meadows*; you have ſhed the tear of pity and admiration

miration over the letter of the noble-minded; yet, ah! the miſtakenly generous *Montauban*.—You have felt for the ſorrows of your friend; yet what imagination can conceive the horrors of my ſoul? I cannot — dare not — dwell on this afflictive moment.—Even to this hour my mind experiences a ſudden phrenzy as memory retraces theſe firſt hours of deſpair; frantic with grief, I flew to my father, I accuſed him as the author of all my miſeries; as the occaſion of eternal wretchedneſs—of never ending deſpair—to the ſon who had loved and honoured him with filial affection.—He was ſhocked at the ſituation in which he ſaw me.—My ravings became violent; and I fell into a delirium, from whence I was not without great difficulty reſtored at the end of ſeveral weeks. By the prudent advice, the ſalutary preſcriptions, and yet more, by the humane and unremitting attention of my phyſicians; reaſon was at length reſtored to her ſeat; but alas! it was a reſtoration which only

encreaſed

encreaſed my anguiſh.—I had loſt the opportunity of following the fugitive ſteps of my *Clara*; whoſe image, ſometimes in the agonies of death, in a land of ſtrangers, her laſt ſighs breathing forth bleſſings on the wretch who had brought on her ruin and deſolation—At other times, as enduring a *living* death; the hapleſs prey of remorſe, and agonizing repentance, yet unabated love, perpetually harraſſed my imagination.—At length my father conſented, for indeed I could be no longer withheld from it; after the firſt moments of returning ſtrength; that I ſhould leave *England* in ſearch of this only object of my love; he had read the ſoul affecting letter ſhe had left for me; and modernized as he was, he had yet a heart; it was ſoftened by her ſorrows; yet more, by the noble generoſity of her ſentiments, by her exalted love, and by the ſufferings of an only ſurviving ſon.—He even promiſed to pronounce her mine by the moſt ſacred ties, could I diſcover her retirement.

But,

But, ah! the dear fugitive was irrecoverably loſt to me, and to the world.

As I had no doubt but her deſign was to retire to a convent, there to take the irrevocable vow, which muſt deſtroy the very poſſibility of our re-union, as ſoon as her change of ſituation would allow of ſuch a ſtep; my only ſhadow of a hope reſted on ſpeedy ſucceſs.—In *England* I was aſſured ſhe would not think of that aſſylum for her woes, of which her letter ſo pathetically ſpoke. Her religion (which was *Catholic*) naturally pointed at a retreat more ſuitable to the feelings of her mind; vain however was every hope; fruitleſs, as ſhe herſelf too prophetically foretold, were all my endeavours to diſcover her retreat.—After ſeveral years ineffectual ſearch, at the earneſt requeſt of my father, who was ſuffering under an incurable diſtemper, and now deſpairing ever to recover the ineſtimable treaſure I had ſo unhappily loſt; I returned to *England*;

land: My poor father lived not long to rejoice in my return to him; he expired in my arms, in a few months after; I received his laſt ſigh, and, my dear *Clara* being likewiſe loſt to me, the world had no longer in it, a ſingle being for whom I would have wiſhed to live. She alas, either lived no longer, or ſhrouded in the gloom of a convent, had there placed an eternal barrier that muſt withhold her for ever from my arms, and from my ſight. The dear offspring of the trueſt affection that ever warmed the human breaſt, had doubtleſs periſhed in its infancy, or perhaps, had never ſeen the light of Heaven; if it ſurvived ſhe had given me her faithful, voluntary, promiſe, that ſhe would have the dear invaluable charge conſigned to my hand; then too, I was to know *whither* ſhe had fled, and what retirement ſhe had choſen as the cloſing ſcene of thoſe ſorrows, of which her wretched *Pemberton* had been [redacted] the guilty author—This, at leaſt, had ſhe lived, was a ſatisfaction

which

which ſhe owed to my miſery, to her engaged word; it was therefore but too probable (agonizing thought) that the delicacy of her frame, ſubdued by the heroiſm of her ſtronger mind, and the agitation ſhe had undergone during a period that required more than uſual tranquillity and compoſure; ſunk under conflicts it was ſo ill-calculated to ſuſtain; how void then of every joy, of every hope, of every pleaſing ſenſation; a burthen to myſelf and others, did I ſuſtain a wretched load of life, without motive, without hope, and without deſire.

At length my dear *Meadows*, a happy chance introduced me to your acquaintance, I ſoon diſcovered in you a congenial mind; and felt a ſomething within me, which impelled me to wiſh your friendſhip; notwithſtanding the difference of our years, and the gloomy diſpoſition of my mind, your heart accorded to mine; this was the commencement of a friendſhip, which has proved

proved the only alleviation of thoſe griefs, which admit not of a cure;—from the moment that firſt introduced me to the knowledge of your heart, I have never diſcerned in it a ſingle trait that called for either diſcouragement or reproof, till the unhappy one that introduced you to the *Counteſs of Aubigny*; there, *Meadows*, was the fatal rock on which your virtues ſtruck—here too, unleſs timely reſolution ſave you, will your honour and your peace inevitably periſh. O recal, my friend, ere yet it is too late, recal the better promiſe of your early youth; recal thoſe ſentiments of probity and of principle, which once ſo diſtinguiſhed the man, who won by theſe, the ingenuous openneſs of his manners, by the manly feelings of his ſoul, the friendſhip, the eſteem, the fraternal affection of mine. Truſt not to the deteſtation in which you at preſent, I at leaſt hope and truſt, hold the thought of actual guilt: till I beheld the lovely *Montauban*, I believed my heart incapable of a diſhonourable deſign; with what indigna-

tion

tion ſhould I not have regarded the man, who had preſumed to tell me, that I ſhould one day become a vile ſeducer, and in return for the moſt diſintereſted love, lead truſting beauty and confiding innocence, to the paths of ſhame, of anguiſh and remorſe, perhaps of death itſelf. You will not believe that my heart, any more than your own, was naturally vicious, depraved, or unfeeling; yet how ſoon did the ſtorm of unreſiſted paſſion, beat down each bloſſoming virtue, and root up every principle which is the juſt pride of a virtuous mind. Profit then, my dear *Meadows*, by the experience which I have too dearly bought, and fly the treacherous ſands, where, while you think you ſtand ſecure, you ſink inſenſibly into the deſtructive ſnare ſpread for you by inſidious paſſion.

Would you ſave your friend from aggravated affliction, and what is of far more conſequence, yourſelf from the miſery which is the infallible attendant of every guilty purſuit, you will at laſt yield to my entreaties,

entreaties, and join me in D——ſhire inſtead of going to *Bath*, which ſcheme can at beſt anſwer no other purpoſe, than that of cheriſhing an inclination which is equally your duty, and your intereſt, to ſubdue—believe me it requires but one effort, one noble effort, and you will break the chain by which you are enſlaved; the conflict will be ſoon ended, you will ſuffer a moment of pain, that will be repaid by a life of ſelf approbation; a conſciouſneſs of having acted agreeably to the dictates of humanity, and of conſcience, and of having ſaved, not yourſelf alone, but, perhaps an amiable woman, [illegible] from unutterable anguiſh, and certain infamy. You will not, *Meadows*, my revived hope aſſures me that you will not ſuffer my wounds to have thus bled afreſh, yet unavailingly; welcome, thrice welcome, every revived agony which I have felt, if, by thus ſuffering, I ſhall have ſaved the friend, for whoſe temporal and eternal happineſs I feel nearly a father's tenderneſs, a father's anxiety. I already anticipate, in thought

thought, the joyful moment in which I ſhall embrace my reſcued friend, then doubly endeared to my ſoul, by his paſt dangers and eſcapes, and by the noble reſolution, which preſerving him on the very verge of the precipice, renders him a ſubject far more deſerving eſteem and of applauſe, than him, who never approached within view of the confines of vice.

Haſten then your departure, my dear *Meadows*; with impatience I wait to receive, more cloſely than ever to my heart, my recovered friend;—this pleaſing expectation fulfilled, and this alone, can enable me ever to ſubſcribe yours, in any degree, happy,

HENRY PEMBERTON.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

SIR EDWARD MEADOWS,

TO

MR. PEMBERTON.

St. James's Square.

GOOD God! my dear *Pemberton*; what afflictions have been your's! and what obligations have I not to you, for the pain ſuch a minute detail of your griefs, muſt have occaſioned you, ſince for my happineſs it was intended.—Yes, my more than *friend!* my *father!* my *preſerver!* I will obey you; nor ſhall your revived ſorrows have agonized your heart in vain; hard as will be the taſk, I will fly this *Circe*, this infatuating *Aubigny*; I will tear myſelf from this only miſtreſs of my heart; this idol of my ſoul; I will not be of her party to *Bath*. I will not even ſee her again, if poſſible, but in thoſe places where our meeting will be unavoidable.

How has your letter affected me: the dear unfortunate!—ſhall the beauteous *Aubigny* too—and through my means—forbid it Heaven!—Forgive me *Pemberton*, I awaken afreſh your ſorrows; within this week I will be in *D—ſhire*, we will paſs the ſummer together in *France*, in *Italy*, where you will, ſo it be far diſtant from hence; I will ſympathize in your too long remembered griefs; and you ſhall congratulate yourſelf on the generous interpoſition that has ſaved from ſhipwreck, the honour, the eternal peace of your

EDWARD MEADOWS.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

LADY SEYMOUR.

Pall-Mall.

HOW little ſtability is there in the enjoyments of this life! how little to be depended on are even thoſe ſatisfactions which we have thought to be moſt permanent. When I laſt wrote to you I was delighted with the idea of our projected *Bath* party, at this moment I could wiſh it had never been thought of; ſo much do our pleaſing expectations vary, and take their colour from the diſpoſition of the moment.—You will wonder what can have given occaſion to reflections ſo oppoſite to the natural turn of my temper; and indeed I hardly know myſelf; but it is certain that I am at this time, in no very agreeable

agreeable frame of mind. Since my *uncle*, *aunt*, and *Lucy*, have left me, I feel methinks as if totally deſerted by the whole world, though daily ſurrounded by multitudes. I am ſick already, *Henrietta*, of this tumultuous town; that ſplendour and parade which at a diſtance ſo captivated my weak ſenſes, and impoſed on my ſilly belief the certainty that every felicity was to be found within its vortex, are become worſe than inſipid, they are irkſome, and diſguſting;—how zealouſly do I now wiſh to fly the crowd, and to join your happy party in retirement at *Mordaunt Caſtle*.

Lady Meadows is juſt announced—I lay down my pen for a few moments—Her ladyſhip has left me, ſhe came to fix with me the day of our ſetting out for *Bath*, it is determined for *Thurſday* next; tho' I feel myſelf very little inclined to the journey, I would rather go to *Weſtbury*, O, how much rather to *you*; but I ſhould appear too fickle after my promiſe ſo lately given. Now that I am ſpeaking of the *Meadows's*

I cannot help mentioning to you, the viſible alteration which I have remarked for more than a week paſt in *Sir Edward*; he who uſed to be the moſt chearful, and entertaining companion, at once the enlivener of ever party, is become ſerious and reſerved, abſent in converſation, is leſs aſſiduous in his general attentions, and eſtranged where he has profeſſed and hitherto appeared to feel, particular friendſhip and eſteem; he is not equally punctilious with myſelf, either, in reſpect to his engagements; he has declined being of the family party, chuſing it ſeems, to make a friendly viſit to *Mr. Pemberton*, in *D—ſhire*, in preference.—In whom ſhall we ever expect to find either perfection, or conſiſtency, ſince even *Sir Edward Meadows* is an inſtance of the capricious and changeable temper of men; ſo unjuſtly, by themſelves, aſcribed as more peculiarly the characteriſtic of our ſex. The interruption of *Lady Meadows* has unſettled me for writing, and as I feel too that I am in no very entertaining humour, I will here

cloſe my truly nothingleſs epiſtle, and reſume my pen, when we ſhall be arrived at the *Bath*. I am, however diſſatisfied with myſelf and with the world, yet am I ſtill my dear *Henrietta's*, entirely affectionate, obliged, and grateful,

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XXXI.

SIR EDWARD MEADOWS,

TO

MR. PEMBERTON.

St. James's-Square.

AFTER my ſo late letter to you, my dear *Pemberton!* after all your remonſtrances; after all the agonizing reflections, you have, ſo much like the zealous friend I ever found you, induſtriouſly brought back in their full ſtrength to your breaſt, when the all ſoftening hand of

of time had began to render them ſomething leſs ſeverly corroding;—after all my proteſtations, my vows to heaven and you, that the painful taſk you had undergone for my benefit, ~~ſhall~~ Should not be yet more embittered by its proving inefficient; how ſhall I dare to inform you, that I am juſt ſetting out for *Bath*, in the very party which I had ſworn not to join, and that I find it impoſſible to keep the promiſe I made of ſeeing you in *D—ſhire*, for ſome weeks to come at leaſt,—yet forbear to reproach me, nor fear that I ſhould be unmindful of your counſels, or that I am unaffected by your ſorrows;—I will carefully cheriſh the remembrance of both, as taliſmans to preſerve me from thoſe dangers which you have pointed out to my view; and, after all, may it not be more glorious to reſiſt, than to fly, temptations? What miſchiefs can enſue to any from my indulging myſelf in the innocent pleaſure of ſeeing, and converſing with, an amiable woman, whilſt I accuſtom myſelf to the reflection that ſhe cannot be ever any thing

more to me than a friend, whoſe engaging manners, and whoſe excellent heart, challenge univerſal eſteem and regard? Indeed, my dear *Pemberton!* I begin to think that we have treated this matter with more ſerioufneſs than it required: but I am ſummoned, the carriages are at the door: I muſt bid you adieu. Let me hear from you when I am at *Bath*. Believe me, my firſt, and highly eſteemed friend, to be your for ever obliged, and inexpreſſibly grateful,

EDWARD MEADOWS.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

LADY SEYMOUR.

Bath.

WHATEVER diſinclination I have, for ſome little time paſt, felt towards the propoſed expedition to this place, I am here perfectly ſatisfied and happy.—There is a great deal of good company at the *Bath*, and the manner in which we paſs our time is intirely to my taſte. — 'T is whimſical enough that *Sir Edward* ſhould be with us after all; but theſe men, the very beſt of them, are fickle creatures: However, he certainly adds much to the ſpirit and pleaſure of the party, and we ſhould have loſt too much by his deſertion.—I am afraid the felicity that *Lavinia* might otherwiſe have enjoyed

from the novelty of the ſcenes around her, will be ſomething impeded by the being followed hither by a lover, who, I think I can perceive, is not altogether agreeable to her.—His name is *Amyand*; he is a genteel young man, with an independent fortune of ſeven thouſand pounds per annum, who has been her captive ſince the time of his firſt ſeeing her at an opera in *Paris*, a year and a half ago.—As his character in life is highly unexceptionable, his manners irreproachable, and the ſincerity, as well as ardour, of his affection for *Lavinia*, unqueſtionable, it may be imagined, that *Lady Campbell* is not a little deſirous of the match, though I am perſuaded ſhe will never urge her to act contrary to her own inclinations in this particular.

The perſevering importunity, however, of this adorer, notwithſtanding the diſcouraging coldneſs with which ſhe treats his unremitting aſſiduities, and her certain knowledge that her acceding to a propoſal

ſo

ſo every way eligible and advantageous, would be highly acceptable to her *dear benefactreſs*, as ſhe uſually ſtiles this, indeed, excellent woman--has a viſible effect on the ſpirits of the ſweet girl, and gives, doubtleſs, an additional penſiveneſs to a mind naturally ſerious.

I muſt beg of you, my dear *Henrietta*, to be very particular when you write, and I ſhall be in daily expectation of hearing from you, as to the time you expect to be in town. With what tranſport, my deareſt friend, ſhall I not fly to meet you there; my impatience increaſes as the time approaches: I truſt that you have acquainted *Sir Charles* with your engagement to paſs ſome time at *the Lodge*, previous to your ſettling yourſelves at *Woodford Houſe*; you will not, I know, wiſh to remain in town after the birth-day: I have promiſed *Mr. and Mrs. Weſtbury* that we will make them a viſit during your ſtay in their part of the world; — in ſhort, I expect to paſs a ſummer of greater felicity than I once

began to promiſe myſelf; the hope of enjoying again the ſociety of my *Henrietta*, forms not, you will believe, the leaſt part of that expectation. Tell me, my friend, do you count the days with equal impatience? Does the near proſpect of our meeting give you as lively a ſenſation of pleaſure, as that with which it fills, at this moment, the heart of your

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XXXIII.

LADY SEYMOUR,

TO

LADY AUBIGNY.

Mordaunt-Caſtle.

YES, my long, and for ever dear *Beatrice!* the heart of your *Henrietta*, be aſſured, equals the utmoſt fervency of yours, in all the warmth, in all the zeal of

of tender and ſincere affection; *equal*, did I ſay, *once*, indeed, I believed that it *could* do no more. I now perceive that it has gone far beyond yours: Nor time, nor abſence, nor enlarged connexions, have in the leaſt diminiſhed the fervour of my regard, or that unreſerved confidence which is the cement, as well as proof of true and undiſſembled friendſhip: But, alas! I no longer meet its counterpart, that of my once ingenuous *Beatrice*. *Lady Aubigny* refuſes that, in the inmoſt councils of her ſoul, ſhe veils, with unfriendly, unconfiding caution, the ſecret receſſes of her heart from that friend, to whom *Miſs* prided to unfold herſelf without reſerve. Her very faults ſhe attempted neither to hide or to extenuate; but, with an openneſs of heart, that half-atoned them, that rendered her doubly amiable, that doubly endeared her to mine; laid herſelf open to the remonſtrances of unaffected and anxious friendſhip; ſhe bore with patience her friend's infirmities; ſhe heard with temper the, perhaps, too importunate, but

ever,

ever, well-meant admonitions her *Henrietta*; presumed to offer, and candidly avowing her little errors, made a progreſs in their conqueſt, that ingenuous concern only could produce. Whither then has my friend wandered from herſelf? Have I, indeed, loſt the noble-minded companion of my early years? She ſtill, indeed, honours me with profeſſions of unabated tenderneſs, and of perfect eſteem; but in the diſguiſe of the unconfidential, the diſingenuous, the ſtudiouſly-concealed *Lady Aubigny*: I recognize her not. It is my artleſs, my undiſſembling, my all-acknowledging *Beatrice*, that I ſeek; but ſeek, it ſeems, in vain: And why in vain? Tell me, my loved friend, and tell me with that ſingleneſs of heart which has hitherto rendered you ſo dear to me, are you the happier ſince you have withdrawn, rather let me ſay *endeavoured* to withdraw, yourſelf (for my affection for you too penetrating to permit ſuch concealment) from the knowledge of your *Henrietta*? I dare to anſwer for you in the negative.

Your

Your heart, my ſweet friend, is not framed to endure the conſtraint of painful reſerve, ſubjected to the ungrateful taſk, ~~puniſh-~~ ~~able~~ in the extreme to elegant and ſuſceptible minds, it would prey with inceſſant reflection on your feelings, and render exiſtence a burthen ſcarcely to be tolerated: Within this fortnight I ſhall be in *London*; let me hope that I ſhall there meet my *Beatrice* all herſelf.—Let reſerve be loſt in the boſom of friendſhip; and let me not find that my once dear ~~Conway~~ Grevil is, indeed, loſt, in the name of *Aubigny*, to her ever faithful, ever affectionate,

HENRIETTA SEYMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

LADY SEYMOUR.

Bath.

Henrietta! my dear *Henrietta!* what a letter have you written me! What tears, what grief of heart, has it not occaſioned me! Cruel! yet, moſt beloved of friends! how have you wounded the ſenſibility of my ſoul by your reproaches! No, my friend! you have *not* loſt your once confiding *Beatrice* in the cautiouſly-concealed *Lady Aubigny*: What unkind expreſſions! Cruel *Henrietta!* and even yourſelf reſerved; for what mean you by my concealments, and want of confidence? Why have not *you* explained yourſelf? For *me*, I have not hidden, I have not attempted to hide from you, whatever has been known to myſelf. If you

you have diſcovered in the inmoſt folds of that heart, ſo well known to you, a weakneſs that had lurked there a concealed and unſuſpected traitor, do I therefore merit the reproaches you make me? Ah! why have you withdrawn the veil? I was happy, while deceived. Can I be grateful to you for having awakened me from the delightful dream of ſecurity to wakeful apprehenſion? But I will not, *cannot write* upon this topic. We ſhall ſoon meet. All chagrin vaniſhes at this welcome thought. I ſhall once again ſee, and converſe with my beloved *Henrietta*. Let her not doubt of the moſt unreſerved communication of every thought of my heart; and, ſince I begin to fear that I have not always known juſtly to decypher it alone, it ſhall be laid wholly open to your moſt minute inſpection: We will examine it together; you ſhall weed it of whatever may have began to grow there, that you ſhall judge pernicious to the ſoil, or unworthy a place in the manſion in which you occupy ſo large a ſhare: If, in the eradication of ſome, I

ſhould

ſhould find the operation painful, I will reflect that it is in conſequence of a friendly attention to my future peace, and ſtifle every propenſity to reſiſt, or to complain: And will not then my *too ſevere*, though intentionally kind, *Henrietta*, confeſs that I am again worthy to ſubſcribe myſelf her *all-confiding—all-acknowledging*—as I ſhall aſſuredly be for ever, her *all-grateful*

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XXXV.

LORD AUBIGNY,

TO

COLONEL EGREMONT.

A TRUCE with thy preachments, *Egremont!* The *elegant mind* of Lady Aubigny (I think that was the phraſe) will not receive ſo *deep a wound* as you are pleaſed to *fear* from the infidel irregularities of her *Cara*.

She

She has found here a *Cher Ami* to conſole her, ~~here,~~ for this diſpoſition is exactly ſuited to the ſentimental character ſhe has of late taken a fancy to aſſume, in lieu of the natural ſprightlineſs, which, nevertheleſs, I, for my own part, think became her infinitely better. This favourite is for ever with her; and as there ſubſiſts a wonderful friendſhip between herſelf, his *Lady*, *Mother* and ſiſters, nothing can be more *apropos*. They have been all at *Bath* for this month paſt. I was requeſted to be of her party; but was too polite to intrude on her *Ladyſhip's* purſuits; and had, beſides, affairs of my own to mind. You will be ſurpriſed at my *non-chalance* perhaps on an occaſion, which, with ſome people would be matter of reſentment and chagrin; but I believe my *wife* to be virtuous in eſſentials: I can truſt to her delicacy, to her principles, and even to her *pride*. I have, therefore, no objection to her paſſing her time with whom, and in what manner, ſhe beſt likes.—As to *La Bella Antonia*, ſhe is every hour more

and

and more attractive. I doat on her, *Egremont*, and could conſent to ſacrifice almoſt my whole fortune to her wiſhes: I am perſuaded that ſhe loves me with the moſt extravagant paſſion, and ſhe has from thence an undoubted claim to the full enjoyment of all which that fortune can procure her. In vain then do you talk to me of ruin and artifice. *Antonia* is all artleſs affection, and diſintereſted love; but ſhe has a right to expect to make a brilliant figure on the world's ſtage; her face, figure and talents, entitle her to ſuch pretenſion, and I will ſupport her in it. I wiſh to Heaven, *Egremont*, thou wouldſt return to town: Thou mighteſt almoſt as well have continued in *Ireland*, as to be thus eternally fixed at *Southgate*; for what ſignify your flying viſits of three or four days. Were you more with us, the lively wit of my little charmer would ſoon reſtore thee to good-humour, and drive from thy brain the muſty maxims with which thy late letters ſo copiouſly abound, and

which

which are half unintelligible to thy, nevertheleſs, ſincere

AUBIGNY.

LETTER XXXVI.

LADY SEYMOUR,

TO

LADY AUBIGNY.

Mordaunt-Caſtle.

I ACCEPT with joy your offered terms of reſtoration to my regained opinion of your unlimited confidence and unimpaired friendſhip. Let then the ſubject reſt till we meet. On Thurſday next we hope to reach *Morton-Hall*, and in a few days after I propoſe ſeeing you in town. How is it poſſible that I ſhould feel a ſentiment like diſſatisfaction when I think of this? I will not add another ſentence; but conclude in the admirable temper, that the

the idea of a perſonal chat with my again good *Beatrice* has given me; and ſo I reſt eternally yours,

HENRIETTA SEYMOUR.

LETTER XXXVII.

MISS SEDLEY,

TO

MISS RIVERS.

Pall-Mall.

MY letter from *Bath*, my dear *Maria*, acquainted you with the continued perſecution of *Mr. Amyand*; not ſatisfied with his intruſion on the pleaſure I ſhould have otherwiſe received from an expedition, in all other reſpects ſo agreeable to me, he has again followed me to town.—Surely there is ſomething ungenerous in a perſeverence which, he cannot but ſee, gives me infinite pain, and which is ſo little

little likely to ſoften me in his favour, that, if he has the leaſt penetration, he muſt perceive it to have rather the effect of encreaſing indifference to abſolute diſlike. — To add to my uneaſineſs, *Lord Aubigny* has given him an invitation to accompany the family to *Aubigny-Place*, where we ſhall be in a few days, and where my dear *Lady Campbell* is to join us.

Since our return from *Bath*, we have had a moſt agreeable acquiſition to our ſociety in *Pall-Mall*, in the arrival of a *Sir Charles and Lady Seymour*; the latter, the confidential friend of *Lady Aubigny*; ſhe is a moſt charming woman, both in perſon and mind, and poſſeſſes ſuch a happy chearfulneſs and equality of temper, ſo much ſtrong ſenſe, goodneſs of heart, and affability of manners, as render her a moſt deſirable and delightful companion. *Sir Charles* is every way worthy of his happineſs, in the poſſeſſion of ſuch a woman, by being truly ſenſible of his felicity; he is, too, handſome and well-bred,

bred, and his underſtanding is ſuperior to that of moſt men with whom it has been my lot to converſe.—It is really delightful to ſee this charming couple, who ſeem to live together as friends, who conceal not a thought from each other, whoſe whole contention is, who ſhall moſt oblige—and whoſe hourly attention ſeems engaged in preventing the others every wiſh.—There is, I think, a peculiar charm in the gallantry of his manner to his happy *Henrietta;* whom he treats with an affectionate gaiety, and always behaves to her with an air which ſpeaks him at once obliged and grateful. — In return, ſhe liſtens with delighted complacency to every word that is uttered by her dear *Sir Charles*; her every look ſpeaks the fulneſs of content, and ſeems to pride in the acknowledgement, it is to him ſhe owes that ſhe is the happieſt of women.—I have once or twice ſeen the gliſtening tear in the eye of *Lady Aubigny*, as ſhe has contemplated the expreſſive countenance of thoſe her friends, and witneſſed the nameleſs and delicate

proofs

proofs of their mutual tenderneſs and eſteem.—I have thought ſhe felt, at theſe moments, more poignantly the ſeverity of her fate, which had joined her deſtiny to that of a man who (to you, my *Rivers*, I may ſpeak without reſerve) knows not how to ſet a juſt value on her accompliſhed worth.—I fear, indeed, ſhe has fallen the ſacrifice of a vanity which ſhe already finds extinguiſhed; and that, for the ſake of the grandeur, which perhaps, ſhe now contemns, ſhe is leading a life of painful and unavailing regret.—I cannot expreſs to you how much I feel for this dear lovely woman: ſince our return to town, and after the firſt tranſports of joy, the natural conſequence of a meeting between boſom friends (ah! *Maria!* when ſhall you and I experience this delight?) who have long ſince ſeparated; ſhe has been totally unlike her former ſelf, ſilent and penſive; ſhe complains frequently of an aching-head, or ſome other indiſpoſition, whilſt, to nice obſervers, it is but too evident that the malady is ſeated in the mind.

Lady Seymour, who watches over her with the utmoſt tenderneſs and attention, exerts more than the natural gaiety of her temper, to extort from her the ſmile which, once, ever dimpled her cheek; *Sir Charles* too, who greatly admires her, and whoſe ſentiments and deſires are ever in unison with thoſe of his *Henrietta*, ſtudies, by a thouſand little diverting ſallies of mirth, and contriving various expeditions of amuſement and pleaſure, to recover her ſpirits from the unuſual cloud which too ſurely hangs upon them.

The *Meadows's* have been leſs than uſual with us, ſince our return from *Bath*, having been very much engaged with *Sir William and Lady Foreſt* (*Sir William* is the elder brother of *Mr. Foreſt*;) they are both very fond of *Charlotte*, and have inſiſted that they viſit *Wilbury* immediately after their marriage, which will, I believe, take place ſoon after their return to *the Cottage*, and during *Sir Charles and Lady Seymour's* ſtay at *the Lodge*, which

is

is contiguous:—And now again I muſt recur to (I own it) the *ungrateful* ſubject of *Mr. Amyand* and his unavailing perſeverance.—I am diſtreſſed above meaſure how to act. To tell *Lady Campbell* that I have determined to reject the man whom, I know, *ſhe* entirely approves, is ſuch a taſk, that I ~~yet~~ want courage to perform it;—yet to give him a final diſmiſſion, without having firſt conſulted with this dear protectreſs of my orphan ſtate; without being authoriſed by her ſo to do, in conſequence of the repugnance which, I ſhall own to her, I feel to be unconquerable, to an union with him; is a conduct ſo unworthy of her goodneſs, of my knowledge of her zeal for my happineſs, and of the obligations which I owe to her—that it is not to be thought of:—No! though I were certain that the conſequence would be her poſitive commands (and never could I diſobey them) that I ſhould become the wife of the man whom my heart could never acknowledge; I could not ſo act:—Rather, much rather,

would I ſubmit to any other ſpecies of miſery, than incur that of her diſpleaſure, by diſobedience to her authority: — But her exalted goodneſs and generous affection, no leſs than the rectitude of her heart and principles, render vain any *ſuch* apprehenſion;—it is the reluctance which I muſt ever feel to act in oppoſition to ~~my~~ *any* wiſh of hers, which has alone with-held me, thus long, from entreating that I may be at liberty to aſſure *Mr. Amy* and ~~that~~ I cannot ever be his.—I ſhall endeavour, however, to take an early opportunity for this purpoſe, after our arrival at *Aubigny-Place*; for, indeed, I cannot much longer endure the irkſome addreſſes of a man who has become worſe than indifferent to me. *Once* I endeavoured to flatter myſelf that *Lady Campbell's* hopes might be one day realized, and that love *might* be grafted on eſteem.—Aſk me not, my dear *Rivers*, why I am already ſo well convinced of the fallacy of this idle hope? It is a queſtion which I have not yet dared to aſk my own heart; yet, perhaps, it tells me

me too much—when it forcibly assures me, that *Amyand* cannot be ever the accepted husband of your

LAVINIA SEDLEY.

LETTER XXXVIII.

LADY AUBIGNY,

TO

LADY SEYMOUR.

The Lodge.

YOU leave me, *Henrietta!* and in the very instant when I am sinking under the affliction of a separation from the first friend of my heart; you require me to resign likewise all the consolation that is left me in the friendship of the most deserving of men. Ah, *Henrietta!* how little deserving of the epithets you so unjustly bestow on him! How widely different from the insidious betrayer that you

would repreſent him? No! he aſks but for my friendſhip, my eſteem alone; they are, they muſt be ever, unalterably his; the ſeverity of virtue cannot ſurely forbid this indulgence.—I *will* preſerve my fame, my innocence, unſpotted; but I will not, *cannot*, renounce the friendſhip of *Sir Edward Meadows*. Why ſhould they be incompatible? I ſincerely wiſh to hear that *Mrs. Morton's* illneſs, for which I am truly concerned, independent of the mortification it occaſions me in loſing you ſo abruptly, is leſs dangerous than was at firſt apprehended, and that we ſhall yet meet again, ere long, either at *Weſtbury*, or elſewhere. — Adieu, my dear friend. Write to me, I beſeech you; but, oh! be tender of my weakneſs, and let pity ſoften your reproofs.

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

The Lodge.

YOU were certainly in the right, *Henrietta*, when you conjectured that *Miſs Sedley's* more than indifference to *Mr. Amyand* originated in a partiality to *Sir Edward Meadows*; you have wiſhed that it might be reciprocal, that *Sir Edward* might become ſenſible to her charms: I once thought your wiſh would not be gratified; I have now to congratulate you on the certainty of its ſucceſs. I was ſeated laſt night in your favourite receſs, at the end of the Orange-walk, meditating on your parting injunctions; when *Sir Edward*, having called with a meſſage from *Mrs. Foreſt*, and being informed by the ſervant that I was in the garden, joined my retirement His converſation, ever rational and entertaining, ſoon baniſhed the gloom which had began to

oppreſs my mind; and it was late ere I recollected that *Lady Campbell* would be ſurpriſed at my long abſence, and propoſed returning to the houſe. I accepted his offered arm, ~~loitering~~ liſtening with a delight which I could not, which I wiſhed not, to controul, to ſentiments which ſpoke the ſoul of honour, and the moſt liberal of human minds; when his ſuddenly exclaiming *happy Amyand! envied privilege!* ſtruck me with an aſtoniſhment which encreaſed, when I beheld in the next walk *Miſs Sedley*, and her *envied Amyand*. He ſeemed pleading with great earneſtneſs, while ſhe appeared to liſten with attention. *Sir Edward* was proceeding, probably to make me the confidante of his new paſſion, when ſurprize, the heat of the evening, the length of the walk, or ſome other cauſe; but probably all theſe conjoined, quite overpowered me; a ſudden faintneſs oppreſſed me, and I was actually ſinking to the ground, when, terrified at my ſo ſudden indiſpoſition, he caught me eagerly in his arms, and ſupporting me to a ſeat

which

which was near, called *Miſs Sedley* to my aſſiſtance. When I came to myſelf (for, indeed, I fainted) I found myſelf ſtill ſupported by *Sir Edward*, ~~*Miſs Sedley kneeling before me*~~, who held a ſmelling-bottle to my noſe; fanning me with the one hand, whilſt the other held mine, which ſhe bathed with her tears:—I was ſenſibly affected by this mark of her tender ſenſibility, and affection for me, and had nearly relapſed into the ſtate from which I had juſt recovered: I did not, however, and was ſoon able to return to the houſe; we were met by *Lady Campbell* and *Mr. Amyand*; for the latter had left us—to procure water and drops, and had alarmed her ladyſhip with the account of my ſituation: — Both herſelf and *Sedley* were all tender attention to me; I retired early, but could not prevail with *Lavinia* to leave me. She perſiſted in ſitting by my bedſide till ſhe ſaw me aſleep; a circumſtance which her very kindneſs, perhaps, retarded.—I feigned at length to enjoy that repoſe which I could not ob-

tain, no longer to detain her; when, believing me really in a ſlumber, ſhe gently preſſed my forehead with her lips, which breathed a tender prayer for my recovery, and ſoftly retired.—*Sir Edward*—but what of *Sir Edward*—yet his behaviour was perfectly enigmatical. The viſible reluctance with which he retired, and the ſigh which eſcaped him while unobſerved, he preſſed my hand to his lips, ſeemed to ſpeak a warmth of friendſhip almoſt incompatible with the tenderneſs he had juſt acknowledged for *Lavinia*: Yet, why talk I of myſtery? Is he not the *acknowledged* lover of the *deſervingly* happy *Sedley*, in whoſe new-born tenderneſs, for whom he will ſoon loſe all recollection of the friendſhip he once deigned to profeſs for

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

The Lodge.

I HAVE been very unwell, my dear *Henrietta!* I am yet indiſpoſed: I have ſcarce ſpoken to *Sir Edward.* I have ſtudiouſly avoided the lover of *Miſs Sedley*; but a few hours ſince I ſaw them together—that very ſeat where he had ſupported my fainting frame. He held her paſſive hand in his; his animated countenance was even more than uſually expreſſive; *hers* exhibited the tendereſt languor; the moſt viſible delight; *Lavinia* ſpoke—but I haſtened to my apartment: I ſhould have been but an intruder.—The lover of *Miſs Sedley* could well diſpenſe with the preſence of

BEATRICE AUBIGNY.

LETTER XLI.

SIR EDWARD MEADOWS,

TO

MR. PEMBERTON.

The Cottage.

I Find by your ſilence reſpecting my late letter to you, acquainting you with *Charlotte's* marriage, and yet more, by your not even deigning to mention me in either of thoſe which you wrote to *Mr.* and *Mrs. Foreſt* on the ſame occaſion, that you are ſeriouſly diſpleaſed with me; I muſt nevertheleſs write to you, though it is probable that I may not be more happy in *this* epiſtle than in former ones. Be it as it may, I *muſt* write; and although you ſhould *never* anſwer me, ſtill will I write on; I have a thouſand, and ten thouſand things to ſay; my heart will burſt if it ſhould not ſpeak—and to none but *you* ſhall it ever dare to whiſper the tale of what

what has been paſſing there.—I have been miſerable for this week paſt.—She *ſhuns*, *avoid* me, ſhe will neither look at, or liſten to me; if I enter the room where ſhe is, ſhe preſently finds ſome pretence for quitting it, when ſhe cannot avoid being in the ſame party, ſhe is coldly reſerved and diſtant; at times I have thought ſhe has not ſeemed happy, and I cannot ſupport the thought of her infelicity, which perhaps ariſes from the conduct of *Lord Aubigny*, who is too faſhionable a huſband to underſtand the bleſſing he poſſeſſes in a woman of her ſenſibility and delicacy; whoſe attention is divided between the turf and the gaming table, not to mention his frequent inebriations. – He has already diſcovered more charms in *La Signora*, —— whoſe extravagance and aſſurance ſeem her only recommendations, than in the loveliеſt of her ſex; but the delicacies of her mind he is incapable of taſting, and even the angelic beauty of her perſon, has not power to fix his inconſtant diſpoſition. All this may be very reaſonably ſuppoſed to give

give uneaſineſs to a woman conſcious of her own worth, and accuſtomed to univerſal attention, not to ſay adoration—His *Lordſhip* is proud of her indeed, and triumphs in her acknowledged ſuperiority to every woman in the faſhionable circle; but in this vanity, and not his tenderneſs is concerned.—That ſhe ſhould not feel herſelf perfectly happy then, I ſay, I cannot be ſurprized;—but for her behaviour, to me, I cannot ſo readily account, much leſs can I be eaſy under it.

I have as yet but ſlightly mentioned to you a *Miſs Sedley*, the orphan of a deceaſed friend of *Lady Campbell's*; ſhe has attached herſelf much to *Lady Aubigny*, and is a ſweet amiable girl, her perſon and manners extremely prepoſſeſſing and engaging, you remember *Amyand*, he is in *England*, and now at the *Lodge*, diſtractedly in love with the fair *Lavinia* (that is her name) but has no hopes, as he himſelf owned to me yeſterday, of making any impreſſion on her heart. "I

once

once flattered myſelf," ſaid he, "that the ſincerity and ardour of my paſſion might at length gain me a return of affection; and was the more encouraged to indulge this hope, as ſhe had declared her heart to be totally diſengaged; but I now find that I have nothing to expect from perſeverance; but a few hours ſince ſhe entreated me to urge her no farther on a ſubject which ſhe was more than ever ſenſible ſhe could never liſten to—She honours me with the aſſurance indeed of her grateful eſteem; how unſatisfactory a return this for a paſſion like mine! My affection for her however is too diſintereſted, as well as too delicate, to allow me to wiſh the attainment of her hand at the expence of her felicity.

I mean in a day or two to bid adieu forever to thi place, and to the dear obdurate, who will I fear, remain for ever the miſtreſs of my heart. Poor *Amyand*, I feel for him moſt ſenſibly; I ſometimes think that *Miſs Sedley*'s indifference to him proceeds from

from ſome prior prepoſſeſſion, but ſhe aſſured him of the contrary, and ſhe is too ingenuous to have declared a falſehood; for him, I much fear that he will find it a difficult taſk to learn the hard leſſon of forgetfulneſs; how impoſſible is it to conquer a paſſion that has been once ſuffered to take deep root in the breaſt, I, too forcibly feel.--This ſubject leads me to the recollection of the preſumptuous avowal which I had nearly betrayed myſelf into ſome days ſince. We were walking together in the garden; ſhe ſupported herſelf on my arm, while I held her dear hand in mine, think of my delightful ſituation, then wonder, if you can, at my temerity? *Miſs Sedley* accompanied by *Mr. Amyand* was at a diſtance, but walking towards us, the latter ſeemed pleading with great earneſtneſs, *Lavinia* to liſten with attention; ah, happy *Amyand!* exclaimed I, envied privilege! O were I like you, I was going to add, at liberty to avow my paſſion, and permitted to hope a return; but turning my eyes towards the *Counteſs*, I beheld her face

face and lips pale as death, an univerſal tremor ſeized her, and ſhe ſeemed ſinking to the ground in an agony of terror, I caught her in my arms, and conveyed her to a ſeat that was happily near, called loudly to *Sedley* and *Mr. Amyand* for aſſiſtance; poor *Lavinia* nearly lifeleſs, and as much terrified as myſelf, and affected to tears at the ſight of her, exerted her utmoſt efforts to recover her, and was ſoon ſucceſsful; in a few minutes ſhe was able to walk to the houſe, where ſhe ſoon grew better. Her indiſpoſition however, which ſhe attributed to her having walked too much, and to the extreme heat of the evening, obliged her, I find, to retire at an early hour; it was with great reluctance that I took my leave ſoon after our return, and not till I had ſeized an opportunity to preſs the hand of the dear invalid to my breaſt, and to "*breathe thereon, one ſoft ſigh, of no common fervour.*"

I called early the next morning, to enquire after her health, and heard (for I could

could not obtain a ſight of her) that ſhe was very weak and low, in which ſtate ſhe ſtill remains. I am half diſtracted leſt this ſhould encreaſe to a ſerious illneſs, and could piſtol myſelf for my unpardonable ſtupidity, in not ſooner obſerving that ſhe was fatigued; I might have known that the delicacy of her frame could ill ſupport the fatigue of the long walk ſhe had taken. But my happineſs in being near her, and enjoying her ſociety without interruption, deprived me of the power of reflection; from the reſerve and coldneſs with which ſhe from this period has treated me, a reſerve ſo oppoſite to her character, and former behaviour, I am led at times, to fear that ſhe ~~prevents~~ reſents the diſcovery of thoſe ſentiments, which ſhe cannot but know I entertain for her; for how impoſſible do I find it in her preſence, to prevent my eyes from telling her, what I deny my ~~tongue~~ to utter; the frequent ſighs which eſcape involuntarily from my boſom, the anxiety which I cannot conceal, if ſhe complains of the ſlighteſt indiſpoſition,

or

or appears with a brow of dejection, or uneaſineſs, muſt have long ſince told her how dear to *Meadows* is her felicity and health.—And yet when recollection brings to view the conſcious bluſh which has glowed on her cheek, the expreſſive ſoftneſs which has beamed from her eyes, and diffuſed itſelf over every feature of her intelligent face, when in an emotion of tenderneſs, which I could not reſtrain, I have ventured to preſs her hand to my lips, to ſpeak a language which love only could have inſpired; ſuch apprehenſions vaniſh; how then can I have offended her? how merited the change in her behaviour? In ſhort, the more I reflect, the leſs able am I to diſcover what I ſo earneſtly wiſh to know; I am now going to pay my devoirs at *the Lodge*, if I am ſo happy as to find the dear unkind one alone, I ſhall probably, at leaſt I earneſtly hope that I ſhall, get rid of the "*frozen gueſt ſuſpenſe.*"

I will not ſeal my letter till my return.

LETTER

SIR EDWARD MEADOWS

IN

CONTINUATION.

I AM juſt returned from *The Lodge*, from a converſation with the amiable *Sedley*, from the ſight of *Beatrice*; going in, as I uſually do when I walk, at the garden gate, I ſaw *Miſs Sedley* ſeated at the end of the Orange-walk; ſhe appeared buried in thought, and did not perceive me till I was within a few paces of her; but ſtarted from her reverie as I approached; ſhe was in tears, and vainly endeavoured to conceal them. I was alarmed at ſeeing her thus apparently diſtreſſed, and trembled for the *Counteſs*. Pardon me, dear *Miſs Sedley*, ſaid I, ſeating myſelf by her, if I am an unwelcome intruder on your ſolitude; forgive me alſo if I am too preſuming in entreating to know the cauſe of your concern.—Am I not your brother? and, as ſuch, will you deny

deny my juſt title to be a ſharer in your uneaſineſs? Something has, I fear, happened to greatly diſtreſs you. — I am, indeed, indeed diſtreſſed — here ſhe pauſed — my fears encreaſed. The indiſpoſition of *Lady Aubigny*, I hope, ſaid I, has not encreaſed. Her tears flowed yet faſter—ſhe did not inſtantly reply—I was ready to expire with terror; in a voice which, I fear, too well explained every feeling of my ſoul, I exclaimed, Tell me, *Miſs Sedley*, I conjure you, tell me, how is the *Counteſs*? Is ſhe, indeed, ill? Her life is, perhaps, in danger—and—don't alarm yourſelf thus unneceſſarily, interrupted *Lavinia* (and ſhe looked at me in a manner which ſeemed to tell me that my ſecret had eſcaped me.) *Lady Aubigny* is much better than when you laſt ſaw her: I am ſorry my tears have occaſioned you this needleſs concern, which had been ſpared you, had they permitted me to have told you at the firſt that the cauſe originated with myſelf, and related not to the ſufferings

ings of another. — She ſpoke theſe words in ſo tremulous a voice, that the laſt word almoſt died upon her tongue. As for me, conſcious of the indiſcretion into which my fears had betrayed me, I could not, for ſome moments, articulate a ſyllable.

On her riſing to leave me, however, I regained the power of ſpeech;—gently taking her hand, I begged her to be reſeated. She complied. I cannot ſuffer you, my amiable *Miſs Sedley*, ſaid I, to leave me in a belief ſo injurious to that friendſhip and eſteem which I ſhall ever feel for you. To diſcover that you have any cauſe of concern, pains me moſt ſenſibly; and could I be in any degree inſtrumental to the removing or leſſening ſuch uneaſineſs, I ſhould feel myſelf moſt happy to be honoured with your commands; nor ſhall you find me unworthy of your confidence. You are ever generous, *Sir Edward*, anſwered ſhe; but the tears which you have witneſſed, were leſs the offspring of grief than

than the overflowings of a heart oppreſſed with gratitude, and overpowered by repeated obligations, and exceſſive goodneſs. *Lady Campbell's* generoſity has pierced my heart with a diſtreſs which, I doubt, if even her diſpleaſure, dreadful as it would be to me, could have affected with equal poignancy. I gueſſed that it was on the ſubject of *Amyand*—She had experienced theſe freſh proofs of the tenderneſs of that noble-minded woman, and purſued not the diſcourſe; nor, indeed, could I have done it had I been ſo diſpoſed; for at this inſtant *Beatrice* croſſed the end of the walk; *Lavinia* called to her: I bowed, kiſſed my hand, roſe, and walked haſtily after her. She returned my ſalutation only by a ſlight inclination of her head, and before we could nearly overtake her, had reached the houſe, and retired to her apartment. *Miſs Sedley*, looked amazement; *I*, no doubt, as I really felt—in the higheſt degree mortified and afflicted: I was obliged to leave *the Lodge* in the ſame ſtate of

ſuſpenſe

ſuſpenſe as I entered it, and, indeed, with encreaſed anxiety, being more than ever aſſured that I have loſt her eſteem.—I can bear no longer to remain ignorant of the cauſe of a diſpleaſure ſo evident, and ſo inſupportable; and will make yet one effort more to ſee her, and to learn from herſelf why I am ſentenced to this ſtate of torturing anxiety. If this fails, I am reſolved to write to her.—The rack of ſuſpenſe is the worſt of torture.

EDWARD MEADOWS.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.